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William Blake's *THE FOUR ZOAS*:

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William Blake's *THE FOUR ZOAS*:
A Reassessment of its Implied Metaphysics

by

C.F. MOUNSEY

Submitted to Warwick University in June 1992 for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

Abstract:

This thesis considers the attempts of various critics to read the work of William Blake as either part of the traditional canon or as excluded from it, because of suppositions made about Blake's view of metaphysics. By means of careful analysis of these opposing views of Blake's poetry, this work finds that neither of these statements can be said to be entirely true because each group of critics, in reading Blake's work, impose their own metaphysics of reading upon it. Therefore, it is shown that rather than discovering the metaphysics inherent in Blake's idiosyncratic writing, most readers of Blake have done no more than find their own metaphysical position reflected back at them by Blake's Contrary.

In order to give some idea of the formulation of the Contrary, Blake's poem *Vala*, with its additions which created *The Four Zoas*, is considered in detail. This section relies heavily upon the layering of new writing upon older work which remains legible beneath, and uses this systematic pattern of changes to explore Blake's changing relationship with Platonic metaphysics. The taking up and then dropping of Platonism by Blake is seen alongside the development of his own metaphysical system of the Contrary, and this non-systematic system is in turn documented in a brief final section which considers the ambiguities on the poem *Milton*.

The complexity and subtlety of the Contrary will thus be displayed as both fitting into the canonical framework of traditional metaphysics, in that it posits a type of return in the fullness of meaning. But it will also be shown to be outside the aegis of traditional metaphysics, in that the return functions in a temporality that is eternally present, rather than one which looks forwards and backwards. Thus Contrary metaphysics will be seen to be closed, and furnishing fullness of meaning, but also changeable, thus not fixing meaning.

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References to Blake's work:

All references to *The Four Zoas* have been checked against Blake's own manuscript in the British Library [Add. Mss. 39,764]. I would like to thank the superintendent of the manuscript room for allowing me access.

Editions of Blake's work cited in this thesis:

Keynes, Geoffrey. *Complete Writings of William Blake with variant readings*. London, 1989. [Cited as K followed by the page number.]

Erdman, David V. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. New York, Second Edition 1988. Commentary by Harold Bloom. [Cited as E followed by the page number.]

Ostriker, Alicia. *William Blake, The Complete Poems*. London, 1977. [Cited as Ostriker]

[When quoting from *The Four Zoas*, we have used the following convention: e.g. 'FZ Page 14, line 16'. This refers to the page numbering of the manuscript in the British Museum, which is preserved by Erdman in the facsimile. The line numbering is taken directly from the page and ignores Blake's own line counts. ('ll.' has been used as an abbreviation for 'lines').]

PREFACE

The question of what makes a literary artist has troubled writers themselves almost since they began writing. The question addresses such problems as what to write about, what is good writing, and, most of all, how to get specific or abstruse meaning across in the absence of the author using words which mean different things to different readers.

In answer to these questions writers from Aristotle to Kundera have written theoretical books about how to write, while other writers from Sterne to Proust have entertained us with poems and novels in which the writer as hero goes out to solve these same problems. The reason behind this double method of approach might seem as simple as the difference between a theoretical text and a story, but in fact both methods leave unsaid the same underlying theory of meaning: which is that words represent something which is not present. It is the separation between word and the absent thing which gives the impetus to both approaches. Even the Deconstructionist theory of meaning, which holds meaning to be always deferred, and the possibility of perfect presence within representation as its anti-teleology, functions with the same basic assumption - that words are separated from the things they represent. But we might question this underlying assumption that has led to so much work being done on the subject of meaning and aesthetics, in that communication through words is usually successful, and the aesthetic problem is rarely one of what is good or bad writing, but why it is good or bad.

Theoretically, from Plato onwards, the subject of meaning in language has been addressed from the point of view that words can *fail* to mean properly; and in literature, the heroic writer must undergo terrible torments before pen is set to paper and life becomes fine literature. However, these terrors and torments of

philosopher and writer seem to forget the day-to-day use of language which is largely successful.

Nietzsche realised this fact and attempted to break up all theories of meaning and writing made before him, to set himself up as the last metaphysician when he subtitled his book *Götzen-Dämmerung*¹, "How to Philosophize with a Hammer". The closure of the metaphysical separation between word and thing to which he aspired pointed out that there was no outside of language from which to look at how it worked and from which to judge how successful it was, and instead posited a "noonday" of perfectly understood meaning. He set out his idea in a chronology of the history of theories of meaning in a section of *Götzen-Dämmerung* entitled 'How the "Real World" at last Became a Myth', which is subtitled 'History of an Error'. The error to which Nietzsche is referring is the error of attempting to discover certainty or an absolute fundamentalism of the word; of understanding that there is a metaphysical separation between the perceived world and the "real world" taken as something different from that which is perceived - in the same way as the word was seen as different from the thing it represented.

In Nietzsche's analysis we find that all oppositions (such as that between the "real" and the perceived) are co-founded and all are based upon the formula of the Aristotelian metaphor which comes down to us in the *Poetics*, and is itself based upon the Platonic rendering of Socrates. This is the "ideal" theory of language where something meaningful passes across meaning to some other husk which is hitherto devoid of meaning. Thus the whole of philosophy is based on the notion that the "real" that lies behind perceptions is that which produces the perceptions without itself being those perceptions, and thus follows the linguistic account of the thing which lies behind the word without itself being the word.

His chronology of the error of thinking that there is a real world sustaining perceptions is in six sections:

1 The real world, attainable to the wise,
the pious, the virtuous man - he dwells in
it, he is it
(Oldest form of the idea, relatively
sensible, simple, convincing Transcription
of the proposition "I, Plato, am the
truth")²

This is the "cave" parable of Socrates that comes down to us written in Plato's Republic. The parable itself is the beginning of metaphysics, for the unmediated "real world" (to which only the philosophers may gain access, and from which they gain their political power) is opposed to the perceived world (which, being mediated by the senses is deemed to be inferior to the "ideal" real world). Thus, even Plato's style of writing depicts what is being communicated, for it was the spoken word of the master (Socrates) which originally imbued the written word of the pupil (Plato) with meaning. It is also the beginning of the possibility of metaphor, for the "ideal" to which the philosopher has privileged access passes its meaningfulness into the world of perceptions.

2 The real world, unattainable for the
moment, but promised to the wise, pious, the
virtuous man ("to the sinner who repents")
(Progress of the idea: It grows more
refined, more enticing, more incomprehensible
- It becomes a woman, it becomes Christian

...)³

This is the moment of St. John's gospel where the Hebraic and Greek traditions are melded into modern Christianity. Here, Plato's God and the Hebrew God are joined as the single foundation (the "real" world) which is the unmediated, or "revealed" world granted to the repentant as heaven. Greek metaphysics is thereby maintained, while the definition of what it is to be virtuous is altered by the addition of the Hebrew tradition. Now, metaphor is guaranteed in Adamic naming, where meaning flows from prelapsarian certainty to be regained in the promise of God to the repenting sinner. (The use of the word "woman" here is important, but there is no space here to discuss its implications in the present work.)

3. The real world, unattainable,
undemonstrable, cannot be promised, but even
when merely thought of a consolation, a duty,
an imperative

(Fundamentally the same old sun, but shining
through mist and scepticism; the idea grown
sublime, pale, northerly, Königsbergian)⁴

Königsbergian is a reference to Kant. His metaphysics transfers the same Christian principle to earth. Kant opposes the "real world" or "noumenal" (sometimes glimpsed, but never comprehended, as the sublime) to the perceived or "phenomenal" world. Because there is no earthly possibility of the revealing of heaven, the opposition is made absolute and the possibility of present salvation is removed. However, the fact of the certainty of the unperceived "noumenal" which imbues the "phenomenal" with meaning in perception, produces an ethical imperative from a description of the way things must be. Metaphorically it is left to

the imperative of ethics to allow the effective transport of meaning from one thing to another.

4. The real world - unattainable? Unattained
at any rate. And if unattained also unknown
Consequently also no consolation, no
redemption, no duty: how could we have any
duty towards something unknown?
(The grey of dawn. First yawnings of reason
Cock crow of positivism.)⁵

This is the empirical world of science which seeks to describe the world by minute observation. For the empiricist, scientific experiment will break down the opposition between the perceived world and the "real world" (and thus prove the metaphysical connection) by careful perception. But Nietzsche goes further.

5. The "real world" - an idea no longer of
any use, not even a duty any longer - an idea
grown useless, superfluous, consequently a
refuted idea: let's abolish it!
(Broad daylight, breakfast, return to
cheerfulness and bon sens. Plato blushes for
shame, all free spirits run riot.)⁶

This is the early Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy*⁷ where he renames the opposition of the "real world" and the perceived world as Dionysian for the "real" and Apollinian for the perceived. In this book, Nietzsche describes the presocratic theatre as the enactment of this opposition as between the dithyrambic chorus and the actors speaking written lines, and finding that both are elements of the same divinity, collapses the opposition entirely. "Bon sens" is

redeemed in its capacity to perceive the world as it is. For however gross or minute the observation, the perception is not different from the world in itself as it is an act of perceiving. This has a devastating effect upon both the oppositions of Plato and St. John. But it also devastates the metaphor and the transference of meaning.

6. We have abolished the real world: what
world is left? the apparent world perhaps?

But no! with the real world we have also
abolished the apparent world!

(Midday, moment of the shortest shadow, and
of the longest error, zenith of mankind.

INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)⁸

With metaphysical oppositions collapsed there cannot be merely a perceived world, nor can the statement of the empiricists: "The real world is the perceived world" make sense as the subject cannot be separated from the object. Perception and "real"-ness are bound up together (rather as in Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle), and it is this binding up that must interest us now.

Nietzsche's writing takes great leaps over other traditional oppositions as well, for if all philosophy was based upon the error of Plato's theory of meaning, then no other oppositions could be deemed to be true and certain either. Thus for Nietzsche, form could not be divorced from content, his style was equally as important as and unopposed to what was written. And neither was it an attempt to write transparently as Plato or the Christians did, as any cursory reading of his work shows. For the style which attempts to be as important as the content upsets classical expectations of a text, and we find that Nietzsche's text is neither merely theoretical nor simply narrative.

However with the break up of classical expectations, this mixed style is so open to interpretations, that to say (for example) that Hitler's reading of Nietzsche was simply *wrong* has no meaning, as the opposition between right and wrong interpretations must necessarily disappear in the clarity of the "noonday" of each reader. The effect of this is to reduce Nietzsche's "noonday" clarity to a sparkling anarchy of mutually exclusive possibilities, each fighting for supremacy without the need for justification or a method of judging truth content. However, Nietzsche's "noonday" forgets that there is a shadow at noon, however short, for without shadow there can be no definition in the clarity of the noonday sun - there must be some structural remnant from the classical model for the anarchy of interpretations to be imbued with any coherence at all⁹. Nietzsche's error was to attempt to break up all previous classical theory, for it left him with the necessity of an ill-defined *Übermensch* who alone, like Plato's philosopher, would be able to understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate readings.

In the present work, we shall find that William Blake drew up a similar chronology of the history of ideas, basing the history of modern philosophy upon the same melding of the Greek and Hebrew traditions by St. John in the fourth gospel. However, where Nietzsche concentrated on the "noonday" and forgot the that there must be shadows of the classical systems for there to be any definition at all, we will find that Blake delved much more deeply into the Hebraic roots of modern philosophy and realised that the world was post-apocalyptic, and that although all things were clear to be understood, understanding was nevertheless a complex procedure. For a world into which the Messiah had already come was no longer post-lapsarian, but redeemed and revealed - even though there were both good and evil parts to it.

Thus, where Nietzsche's "noonday" reduced everything to one level by collapsing all philosophical oppositions. Blake's cosmology retains some element of opposition in order for there to be definition at all. However, this is not an reinscribing of classical metaphysical oppositions, but a reinterpretation of them in post-apocalyptic terms of the Contrary - a dynamic opposition which, it will be seen, does not collapse into a hierarchy. Thus we will describe the Contrary as Blake's means of understanding the closed metaphysical world of good and evil after apocalypse, which is developed into a more and more powerful philosophical tool throughout Blake's writing.

However, we shall also find that for Blake to be true to the spirit of the closure of metaphysics, he cannot define the Contrary in general terms outside the body of his work, for in such a world, there cannot be an opposition between a theory of meaning and meaning itself. For if meaning is supposed to be a plenitude in the words, the theory of meaning must be performed in the act of writing and understood in the act of reading. Thus where Nietzsche's texts appear to fall between the two stools of theory and narrative, Blake's last great works, *Milton* and *Jerusalem* must be read as both and either. However, since Blake was developing a complex philosophical tool over long a period of time, we shall find that it is possible to see the development of the Contrary in *The Four Zoas*, where the altered manuscript of the poem lends itself to reading the Contrary in various stages of incompleteness.

The functioning of the Contrary in the post-apocalyptic world will thereby be found to be able to balance not only the fact of good and evil in the world, but the need for both the classical systems and the clarity of 'noonday'. This will be seen to be necessary because of the fact that the historical movement of the classical system, by rejecting the old and impure for the new and purified, which is the movement towards clarity in language, must itself be rejected. However,

the double negative of rejecting rejection will be seen to allow the remnants of system to be retained, while also destabilizing their purpose of attempting a crystal clear style.

To see this functioning, Blake's poem *Milton*, which has equivalent status in Blake's poetry to Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, is found to be unable to be read as a biographical account of what made Blake a poet. For where *The Prelude* searches for the self in spots of time in the past which are sources of what is valuable in the present (following the linguistic view of philosophy as the search for that which imbues words with meaning), *Milton* describes the poet's entering Blake while the poem (of the same name) enters the reader. Thus the reader's experience becomes as important as the poet's, demonstrating the theory of meaning where words are expressed directly and successfully, and are not separated from what they mean, *at the same time* as the poem is being read. Theory and practice are therefore not separated as the Contrary is elucidated in the method of its own functioning.

The work itself begins with a look at the problem of meaning with regard to T.S. Eliot's reading of Blake, which sets up the possibility that Blake had a unique metaphysics. It follows through the work of Kathleen Raine, who disagreed with Eliot, and discusses the reasons why Raine's traditional view of metaphysics must necessarily take such a position. This discussion will lead to the discovery of Blake's Contrary, and Chapters 3 and 4 will consider the ramifications of this epistemological tool. Chapter 5 discusses various readings of *The Four Zoas* as the text in which we can see the Contrary develop most clearly, and Chapters 6 to 11 give a reading of the development of *The Four Zoas*, highlighting the philosophical changes which Blake underwent during his revisions of the work which lead to the fully fledged Contrary. Chapter 12 considers the historical proof

for the reading of *The Four Zoas*, and gives a brief account of the functioning of the Contrary in *Milton*.

As with all readings of Blake's poetry, the section concerning *The Four Zoas* must necessarily subside into mere recounting of the events of the poem. This however must be understood as showing the degree to which the theoretical and narrative elements are combined, and to which combination one must succumb, rather than attempting to extract theoretical points, in order to remain appropriate to Blake's textual strategy

Notes:

1 - *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale. (London: Penguin, 1968),
[Cited as TWI].

2 - TWI p.40.

3 - TWI p.40.

4 - TWI p.40.

5 - TWI p.40.

6 - TWI p.40.

7 - Or at least of the first fifteen chapters of this book, as the later chapters in
praise of Wagner were later denied in *The Case against Wagner*.

8 - TWI p.40.

9 - For a full discussion of this, see Luce Irigaray, *Amante Marine* (Paris: Minuit,
1980).

Chapter 1 - The Generalism of William Blake

The kind of general comment represented by T.S. Eliot's essay in *The Sacred Wood* (1920) already belongs to a vanished world. All Blake criticism today that is worth reading is specialised to some degree, and in the nature of things has to be. Northrop Frye¹

In T.S. Eliot's paper 'William Blake'² we are directed to rank Blake lower than Dante because, by following his imagination, the poorly educated English poet failed to follow in the Latin tradition. Dante is hailed as paradigmatic of a 'classic' because he follows this 'framework of mythology and theology and philosophy', whereas Blake is only 'a poet of genius' because of his 'environment which failed to provide what such a poet needed'.³ For according to Eliot, Blake eschewed the advantages of continental culture and created his own philosophy like 'an ingenious piece of home-made furniture'.

This view of Blake's poetry must derive from the biographical fact that because Blake never went to an ordinary school he was never acquainted with the structures of classical metaphysics. As we shall see later this view will prove to be wanting when we go on to consider Blake's complex relationship with Platonic metaphysics. However, in the present chapter we shall discuss Eliot's contention about Blake's status and find that rather than having made up his own metaphysical standpoint Blake has in fact chosen one element of Eliot's own double metaphysics and while Eliot is forced to vacillate between two positions, Blake's adherence to one of them fits him with a more successful method of viewing the world than his detractor.

After having isolated Blake's metaphysics, we shall then be forced to move to the conclusion that whereas Frye calls for more specialized work to be done on Blake's poetry, this metaphysics makes it necessary that all readings of Blake

must be, like Eliot's, of a general nature. This generalism will in turn be seen to put much of the work on Blake which attempts to demonstrate his concurring with various recognized metaphysical frameworks, and with Plato's metaphysics in particular, into doubt. Thus we shall be led into the main body of the present work which is concerned with a study of the evidence for the links between Blake and Platonism dealing specifically with his abandoned masterpiece *Vala or The Four Zoas*.

Eliot's paper *William Blake* falls into two sections. The first is laudatory while the second is specifically critical of Blake's oeuvre because of flaws in poetic form. Eliot begins with a description of Blake's poetic development from the boy writing typical eighteenth-century verse to the mature genius who has captured 'the peculiarity of all great poetry' which rates him alongside Homer, Aeschylus, Dante and Villon. This peculiarity is called 'honesty' with respect to 'the essential sickness or strength of the human soul'. And it is this essence which takes genius to capture in verse, for its capture in Blake's verse illustrates 'the eternal struggle of art against education, of the literary artist against the continuous deterioration of language'.

But Eliot ends the first section with a caveat:

It is important that the artist should be highly educated in his own art: but his education is one that is hindered rather than helped by the ordinary processes of society which constitute education for the ordinary man. For these processes consist largely in the acquisition of impersonal ideas which obscure what we really are and feel, what we really want, and what really excites our interest.⁴

Here Eliot is pointing out the problem which derives from the attempt at producing uniformity inherent in mass education. For most people learning a few abstracted ideas will suffice, but in the case of the artist education must be transcended in order that the "honest" depiction by genius may come about. That Blake was not formally educated allowed him to be free of the need to transcend these learned abstracts. But it also made him too free for Eliot who is then able to accuse Blake's poetry of formlessness in the second part of the paper, in that it does not use recognisable (even if deformed) fragments of the Latin/Greek tradition. Thus we see that for Eliot, the status of a classic is defined by the gaining and transcending of a thorough education in the Classical tradition, which the "genius" Blake lacked.

We can find the reasons behind this criticism of Blake in Eliot's philosophical writing of the same period, where we can determine all the elements of his argument in theoretical form. *Knowledge and Experience in the work of F.H. Bradley*⁵ is an account of Eliot's general acceptance with minor criticisms of Bradley's idealist account of Immediate Experience as a basis of epistemology. In it we read of the development of subjectivity and objectivity out of Immediate Experience and the problems of proving this to be the case.

Immediate Experience is defined as:

not a stage which shows itself at the beginning and then disappears,
but [that which] remains at the bottom throughout as fundamental. And
further, remaining, it contains in itself every development which in a
sense transcends it⁶

Such a transcendence must be reciprocal, thus, although Immediate Experience remains "at the bottom" as necessary for the existence of subject and object, it is

not available to be comprehended by these particulars of knowledge or experience. Nevertheless, Immediate Experience does not:

merely contain all developments, but in its own way acts as their judge.⁷

This step is Kantian in its formation, following the Third Critique in its appeal to a judgemental "feeling" which Bradley defines as "the immediate unity of a finite psychical centre".⁸ In other words, we know of the existence of Immediate Experience beneath our everyday experience of subjectivity and objectivity because of a "feeling" which underlies all our consciousness. This is not a "feeling of" which moves as subject outwards to an object, but the "feeling" which occurs as a constant residue which is:

the general condition before distinctions and relations have been developed, and where as yet neither any subject nor object exists.⁹

In this way, the "feeling" leads subjectivity to the certainty that Immediate Experience underlies it although it cannot be isolated, and although it is not only of the subject. This is for Eliot the postulation of an atemporal ground "given" upon which knowledge is founded, where knowledge is something which takes place in space and time.

From this point on, Eliot begins to differ from Bradley in that where Bradley is happy to continue and build upon this postulate, Eliot sees it as an interpolation. As such, Eliot finds it not quite so sure a foundation upon which to base epistemology, for he points out that if there were any purely immediate knowledge, we would not know anything about it as all presentation is accompanied by reflection, and all feeling by thought. That is to say, however

much we feel that we have this residual "feeling" it always occurs as a result of thought and so is represented in some way rather than being free of distinctions and relations. In this way the line between the "given" (immediate/ ontological) and the constructed (conscious/ epistemological) must always be drawn blindly. For Eliot, the postulation of the "given" may only be defended because of the implication it has upon all our practical activity.

To begin with, he claims, we work with an "I" which is imputed by "my experience" through demonstratives which come from the past, are contained in the present and allow expectations for the future.¹⁰ Personal experience is a series of categories, which, when shared with other people by means of language, builds up a continuum from that which is accepted as *real* to the *imaginary* depending upon how much consent is given by each person's experience. From this collective of experience the subjective and objective are separated out by means of correction, horses and houses being taken to be more objectively real, unicorns and round squares more subjectively ideal. And this separation is performed by means of "feeling" as judge of "the general state of the total soul not yet differentiated into special aspects".¹¹ Thus we must understand the Truth as shared experience, for in this way it is least affected by subjectivity or objectivity,

If this is the metaphysics of Eliot's world, we may now apply it to literature in general. The Truth is in no way a starting point to be recovered as is Heidegger's "physis", but is a point of harmonisation between all discourses, a sort of global pragmatism. However, in order for this point to be reached, the ever increasing diversification of language must be confronted by the writer. This is exemplified by two illustrations in Eliot's "*William Blake*" paper. The first is in "the

eternal struggle of art against education", and the second, "the eternal struggle of the literary artist against the continuous deterioration of language".

In order to be certain of anything, and thus approach certainty of Immediate Experience and hence Truth, there must be a harmony or consensus of what is real and what is imaginary so that the categories may be crystallized out. However, this consensus is beset by the constant problem of diversification and reunification of meaning in the flux of language. Meaning diversifies in the classroom as one teaches many, and reunifies as words go out of use and old meanings aggregate on the words left "alive". Thus there is no still point at which to be certain of the harmony of the consensus.

For this reason, it is up to the genius of the literary artist to present emotions in an extremely simplified form in order that the greatest number of readers possible can understand what is being evoked. In this way the commonality of "feeling" which lies behind the words of evocation can be more readily understood. But there are other ways open to the poet. If a more complex work is attempted there are the husks of traditional forms, learned at school, into which new emotions may be put - like new wine into old skins. Thus form becomes important because although the words may lose their meaning, the rhymes, rhythms and rhythmic patterns which come down to us from the Greeks to the Romantics can imbue poetry with Bradleyan "feeling" in the inevitability and sense of ending which marks these forms and educes comprehension or initiates the search for a generally agreed meaning. Moreover, although words lose their meanings or have new meanings added to them in constant accretion down the ages, they can become portmanteau terms. As such, although a word may mean something different to different readers, to readers who all share in a common education, they will at least point in roughly the same direction.

In this way, Eliot must expect all writers (and their readers) to share in the same education in order that the practical application of his theoretical ground "given" will lead to as solid a ground as possible for epistemology. Since Blake did not have this education and created his own metaphysics, Eliot is in effect accusing him of being necessarily mistaken in his subjective belief that he had certain knowledge of Immediate Experience, for he does not attempt to harmonize with the classical structures. This is because Eliot's own metaphysics, in that it evokes tradition as a necessity, must itself stand as a product of that tradition, as the most harmonious outcome of what has preceded it. Blake's prophecies on the other hand, in drawing up their own pantheon, must necessarily fail to give themselves to the Eliotesque understanding because they are not part of tradition which stands as the only way to the ground "given".

In order to develop this theoretical basis behind Eliot's criticism of Blake in a way which will throw light on Blake's alternative, we must now look at Richard Wollheim's account of the effect of Bradley's philosophy in Eliot's poetry.¹² In his paper, Wollheim draws out four reservations which Eliot had about Bradley's philosophy. The first is a question as to the temporal or logical nature of the priority of Immediate Experience. The second suggests that Bradley was not sufficiently radical in his account of what happens when Immediate Experience resolves itself into its constituents. The third points out the need for a more detailed study of the elements into which Immediate Experience is resolved. The fourth concerns the difficulty of absorbing everything into a higher whole, Bradley's "finite centres".

Because Wollheim is making a general survey of Eliot's poetry, his strategy is to develop only the second and third of these reservations. Our present purpose demands that we consider the first and fourth.

To the problem of the temporal or logical priority of Immediate Experience, Eliot does not give a definite answer. In his writing on Bradley and in his poetry, he vacillates between the two possibilities, suggesting that it is not possible to conclude with more certainty. In *Little Gidding*, he writes:

But this is the nearest in place and time,
Now and in England.¹³

This suggests a logical priority of Immediate Experience which can be felt clearly at certain occasions - Now and in England. And it is clung to desperately a few lines later as the moment vanishes:

Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.¹⁴

Temporality intrudes upon the logical enlightenment and Immediate Experience is shrouded again in the uncertainty of the moment which is always lost to history. "Never and always" suggests that the immediate must either be graspable at all moments or not at all.

In *East Coker*, the section taken from Sir Thomas Elyot appears to claim the temporal priority of Immediate Experience. The:

... daunsing, signifying matrimonie -
A dignified and commodious sacrament,
Two and two, necessarye coniunction. ...¹⁵

suggests a previous life of the writer in his ancestor, reminiscent of the genealogies of the Bible. In this case, the immediateness of experience is only

recoverable if one goes back far enough in one's blood line to reach the point at which subjectivity and objectivity separated out for the first time. But the logical surges through this structure to disrupt it:

Dawn points, and another day
Prepares for heat and silence Out at sea the dawn wind
Wrinkles and slides. I am here
Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning ¹⁶

The dawn of another day suggests the irrecoverability of time in the sequence of days and the impossibility of going back to one's beginning. Catching time is like catching the wind, and to attempt it disrupts the spatial integrity of the self. "I" can only be in one place at a time.

At this point we can turn to Eliot's criticism of Blake's longer poems:

... the weakness of the long poems is not that they are too visionary, too remote from the world. It is that Blake did not see enough, became too much occupied with ideas
We have the same respect for Blake's philosophy that we have for an ingenious piece of home-made furniture: we admire the man who has put it together out of a number of odds and ends about the house
England has produced a fair number of these resourceful Robinson Crusoes, but we are not really so remote from the Continent, or from our own past, as to be deprived of the advantages of culture if we wish them. ¹⁷

Bearing in mind Eliot's conclusion that it is uncertain whether Immediate Experience is temporally or logically prior, we can see that this section is criticizing Blake for ignoring the temporal aspect of priority. Blake's occupation with ideas, his "home made" metaphysics did not derive from outside his house.

Blake is a solipsist, building a metaphysics out of his own experience, and thus necessarily accepts the logical priority of Immediate Experience which does not require that any account be taken of the philosophical traditions around him. According to Eliot, although logical priority will imbue his prophecies with a sense of certainty, such certainty will be illusory because it will be open to the misunderstanding inherent in the temporal slippage of words that makes up "the continuous deterioration of language" that masks Immediate Experience in writing from moment to moment.

Eliot's criticism here is based on his criticism of solipsism in *Knowledge and Experience*. Whereas Blake's metaphysics predicates certainty in the "not-self" as reciprocal to the formation of "self" as a functioning "I" (Blake the writer/ Anyone the reader), the "I" so formed is taken by Eliot as a construct of "Blake's experience" (or the reader's experience) and so is not certain because it does not take into account the necessity of the practical agreement (between Blake and reader) as to the categories of metaphysics. In other words, Eliot is suggesting that Blake does not have a metaphysics because his Immediate Experience is taken as certain: or "closed".

What Eliot has not noticed in his reading of Blake is the systematic survey and rejection of the philosophical traditions, the Rationalism and Empiricism of his own time. Eliot has not taken into account Blake's self education, and his reading of Plato followed by his rejection of the openness of metaphysics along with any form of idealism. For with his own closed metaphysics there is for Blake no problem in absorbing everything into "higher wholes", or Bradley's "finite centres" because there is no vacillation between the temporality or logicity of Immediate Experience. In adhering to the logicity of the priority of Immediate Experience, everything is automatically absorbed by the finite individual as his or her own "finite centre", the infinite (everything) in the finite. In this way Blake

avoids the solipsism of Eliot's idealist metaphysics in a criticism of the root cause of modern idealism - Plato. For, if everybody has Immediate Experience, they must only criticize the beliefs with which they have modified their world - religious or philosophical - to automatically reach the sort of harmony Eliot constantly defers.

Without Blake's closed metaphysical approach, Eliot is left with his fourth reservation about Bradley's philosophy. The "finite centres" are unattainable for everything because of the criticism solipsism makes of the certainty of "my experience" and its sharing in language. Thus Eliot's dream of harmony to produce a complete map of certain categories is always deferred to the future. What remains for the followers of tradition is either to destabilize time in a specialized study of the moments of logical priority, or to destabilize space in a specialized study of the history which lead to the perceptions which are experienced by the subject taken as a product of history.

This development of Eliot's philosophy, calling for greater and greater specialization, is clearly Frye's position on Blake criticism and derives its validity in the same way from tradition and logic. However, if we believe Eliot's single criticism of Blake's lack of a metaphysics is mistaken, and substitute a logically prior Immediate Experience closing up Blake's metaphysics, we can see that specialization is irrelevant for comprehending Blake's work as his writing is only true at the instant of its being read, and for the single reader who reads it. This would therefore give internal evidence which would disallow any use of a particular specialized critical method to illuminate Blake's work for all time, and predicate the necessity that all readers are necessarily generalists in Blake studies.

In this way, a consideration of Eliot's general criticism of Blake leads to the suggestion that Blake sees the job of the poet as showing that there is no

transcendental position from which to consider the stability of readings, no "outside" poetry from which to look in, or an "outside understanding" which we all feel is there but cannot represent. For Blake, Immediate Experience is most certainly "at the bottom" of everything, and in this certain place avoids any reciprocal transcendence with subjectivity and objectivity.

In complete disagreement with the notion that Blake is anti-metaphysical and anti-classical, is Kathleen Raine's monumental *Blake and Tradition*. Before we illuminate Blake's position vis à vis metaphysics, therefore, we must test the validity of Eliot's contention that Blake is anti-metaphysical, and our contention that his metaphysical system is closed.

Notes:

1 - *Blake - A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. by Northrop Frye, Twentieth Century Views (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p.1. [Cited as Frye, 1966].

2 - In *Blake's Poetry and Designs* ed. by Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant (New York: Norton, 1979), p.506. [Cited as Johnson & Grant.].

3 - Written by a man who was at the time lecturing in Working Men's Colleges, we can perhaps see the Fabian Socialist effect of Bertrand Russell (with whom Eliot

was living) upon the man who was only later to become Conservative, Catholic and Classicist.

4 - Johnson and Grant, p. 508.

5 - T.S. Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the work of F.H. Bradley* (London: Faber, 1962). This work was to have been Eliot's doctoral thesis, but was never presented. However, it was written before *The Sacred Wood*, perhaps 1915 -19. [Cited as KE].

6 - KE, p.16. Eliot has taken all of these quotations from F.H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), p.406-7.

7 - KE, p.16.

8 - KE, p.16.

9 - KE, p.16.

10 - This derives from St.Augustine's *Confessions*, Chapter 13, and was to be the basis for the 'later' Wittgenstein.

11 - KE, p.20.

12 - Richard Wollheim, 'The Influence of F.H. Bradley in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot', in *Eliot in Perspective; a symposium*, ed. by Graham Martin (London: Methuen, 1970).

13 - T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber, 1969), p.192.

14 - Ibid.

15 - Ibid. p 178.

16 - Ibid.

17 - Johnson and Grant, p. 509.

From the very beginning of her twenty years study of Blake which culminated in *Blake and Tradition*, Kathleen Raine "could not but believe that in the *terra incognita* of the Prophetic Books there must lie ... an entire vision, equal to, if not surpassing, the revelation of the Songs".¹ Thus she began her search for the "knowledge whose sources were not divulged"² which was shared by Blake and, for her, his greatest commentator, W.B. Yeats. This knowledge would be a "unifying principle"³ which would act as the single key necessary to understand Blake's mythological cosmos.

Raine could be certain that Blake's was a mythological cosmos because the other readings of Blake available to her were based upon history and psychology which are discourses that fragment to understand, and therefore could not produce the singular *revelation* she sought. Thus Raine's introduction disposes of Erdman's, Wicksteed's and Preston's commentaries on Blake in favour of the ordering principle of traditional metaphysics with its accompanying language of symbolic discourse. The logic behind this move is backed up by the argument that Blake could not be said to be a prophet if the revelation of his prophecies was no more than a projection of his social position or psychological state; and that any collective unconscious he might be said to have tapped was no more than the traditional mythologies of collective language.

However, this argument is problematic on both of its levels. First, the idea that Blake's prophecies could be more than projections of his social or psychological state must be based on the assumption that Blake may only be said to be a prophet if he was an interpreter of "knowledge whose sources were not divulged". In this case, Blake's being named as a prophet has *already* opened up the metaphysical separation between language and the world, between the

openness of perceived experience and the hiddenness of reality. For, by beginning with Blake in the status of prophet - understood in the manner of the Oxford English Dictionary⁴ - all that it is possible to find is traditional metaphysics because this is already implied in that designation of Blake, and as such acts as the ground base of such a reading of Blake.

Likewise on the second level, if Blake *has* tapped some unifying collectivity of unconscious in the symbolic inheritance he possessed, Raine still secures her argument that he falls within traditional metaphysics by making an appeal to the same assumed ground base:

Tradition is the record of imaginative experience, and its myths and symbols provide a language in which such knowledge may be expressed and transmitted. Sublime art does not speak a private language.⁵

Here, it is the term *imaginative experience* which holds the pre-existent metaphysics, for rather than beginning with the possibility of Immediate Experience as the source of the unifying collectivity of unconscious (which would suggest that the world does not need interpreting), Raine begins with a Neoplatonic position which she proceeds to foist upon Blake as his own. For *imaginative experience* is already mythological and symbolic as it is philosophically idealist. *Imaginative experience* (not Imagination) is a combination made up of experience, which might be direct or indirect, and imagination, which the OED tells us is 'the formation of a mental concept of what one sees'. Thus again, Raine has begun with a position which needs an interpreter to make sure that the openness of the mental concept fits perfectly upon the hiddenness of the world which one has perceived.

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In Raine's cosmos, therefore, it follows that Sublime Art cannot speak a private language because tradition steeps us in that language by myth and symbol. These are the processes of *imaginative experience*, and thus are necessarily to be interpreted by prophets who know the hidden truth simply because they are well versed in that tradition. The justification of the truth of their interpretations is that they follow tradition which leads back to some bedrock which has been forgotten; and that bedrock truth is what grounds all our language, myth and symbol, however diverse or perverse or sublime it appears to be. Thus every sublimity must speak to all because understanding is only possible by this interpretative method - the interpretation of the open by prophets to reveal the hidden. In this way, Raine's Blake may be traditional at the core even though his surface may seem quite unlike anything else in the tradition.

A necessary adjunct to this position is that any criticism raised against the traditional cosmos would also appear to be criticism of the possibility of a shared understanding of language, and a proclamation of the inviolability of solipsism. This is because it would be a criticism of prophetic interpretation, which is the only possible way to unify the diverse, solipsistic views of the hidden world. But this becomes problematic for at the basis of Raine's cosmos is the unquestioned structure of traditional metaphysics which remains as an infinite regression in her argument. The truth of the prophet's words is guaranteed by the truth of another prophet's words which is guaranteed by the truth of another prophet's words etc. Whereas it is logically possible that language is totally private, or that it is shared in some other way.

To make this point more clearly, we might look at part of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*⁶. Paragraph 269 reads (my emphasis):

Let us remember that there are certain criteria in a man's behaviour for the fact that he does not understand a word: that it means nothing to him, that he can do *nothing with it*. And criteria for his 'thinking he understands', attaching some meaning to the word, but not the right one. And lastly, criteria for his understanding the word right. In the second case one might speak of a subjective understanding ...

Here, Wittgenstein does not appeal to anything outside perceptual evidence in his account of meaning. For Wittgenstein, the behaviour observable in the listener (what the listener is seen to do with the language heard) is the only evidence necessary to know that the language has been comprehended in the manner in which it was intended. Thus in the second case of understanding, which is called *subjective understanding*, the attaching of a meaning to the word, *but not the right one*, is not correct only because it was not the meaning intended, and thus produced the wrong behaviour. Therefore, this is not an absolute error as it would be in Raine's cosmos. For Raine, it would be an error against the whole of tradition and the possibility of language functioning at all, whereas for Wittgenstein it is only an error in that moment.

Thus we can see that Wittgenstein's case by case subjectivity of the language game does not require any justification from a position external to perception: the correct comprehension of a word derives from the particular case.

To use a word without a justification does not mean to use it without a right.⁷

It is up to the listener to understand (to produce behaviour concerning) the words how s/he wishes. However, although this appeal to the individual situation overcomes the problem of the infinite regression of Raine's traditional cosmos, it rests upon an absolute solipsism which seems to take away all depth to meaning

if everything means potentially something different to everyone who understands. Right up to the end, Wittgenstein was still doubtful of shared language or experience, using terms such as "I believe" when he is talking about certainty⁸, always wrestling with Descartes' problem of the evil genius.

This problem with solipsism seems to run counter to our experience, people do seem to share in understanding, and at great depth. Thus the question is begged as to whether it is possible to sidestep the need for some kind of super-perceptual element or tradition without falling foul of solipsism. This would be to produce a subjective language which was self-justifying, and in the *Philosophical Investigations*, we can see Wittgenstein making this move in his assertion that no language can be *logically* private.

In that a language is understandable at all, it must be possible for any person to understand it. This would seem to give Kathleen Raine's statement about Sublime Art some sort of grounding and arrest her infinite regression for it imbues language with the force of a necessary understanding. If the heart of language is the necessity that it can be understood by all people, there is no longer any necessity in a search for a firm bedrock of reality to guarantee comprehension, a simple consensus would suffice to ensure correct understanding. In Wittgenstein's case, this would rest upon behavioural criteria as to what all people *did* with language.

But the creation of a self-justifying subjective language could not be a production out of a vacuum, for it would have also to take on the force of existing belief in tradition in order to give it a free reign in accounting for variations and developments in language consensus. And here is the rub, for the power of tradition lies in the fact that it engulfs everything new and claims it as its own product, using itself (its engulfing power) as its own justification of linguistic variations and developments. Tradition is the process of searching out a unifying

root: thus it moves by ignoring the surface variations and *interpreting* becomes no more than repeating the same root over and over again. In this way, Raine's covert claim for the support of Wittgenstein's phenomenological language game to close up her infinite regression is effaced by her first appeal to tradition. For tradition's nature is always to claim itself logically prior to and foundational of everything including language games, because tradition sees itself as the background of all productions.

It is the teasing out of a pathway between solipsism and traditional metaphysics in which we will find Blake engaged throughout much of his work. Only by understanding Blake as trying both to avoid the Scylla of tradition, and the Charybdis of solipsism, can we follow the complexity of his position which his poetry and designs so brilliantly draw out.

But this is not to turn our backs on Raine's work. Bearing in mind the fact of the preexisting metaphysics in her traditional reading of Blake, we can re-read her conclusions to see quite clearly how Blake goes about trying to avoid tradition in his work up to the abandoned poem *The Four Zoas*. After this point, we will see how he eventually realises that confrontation is the method of movement of tradition, and sidestep is the only way to avoid it. In *Milton* and *Jerusalem* we may then see how Blake's conclusions offer the promise of community rather than the horrors of solipsism after traditional metaphysics has been side stepped, in a closed metaphysical way of understanding the sharing of language.

Raine's account of Blake is based upon traditional metaphysics of the form of Boehme's "as above, so below", which metaphorically finds the constellations of the stars in the human entrails⁹. This, Raine says is Blake's "Divine Analogy"¹⁰, and the process of his poetry is the recovery of the correct fixing of the divine onto the human. She writes:

Blake certainly believed that a work of art speaks directly to the imagination, but few retain into adult life the capacity for an intellectual response that transcends corporeal understanding.¹¹

This is the same move we saw in Eliot's account of Blake's work. Raine too, blames this loss of the true intellectual response in adult life upon education. She claims however that this is a fogging of traditional metaphysics beneath the various layers of symbolism, and may be reversed by a search through the books Blake himself had read, not to find sources for the accidental images, but to discover traditional metaphysics motivating his mentors and to map it, by inference onto Blake's poetry.

The first influence Raine claims upon Blake was Emmanuel Swedenborg:

From his earliest years he was saturated in Swedenborgian symbolism.¹²

and following from this claim, Raine can suggest that Blake "was a symbolist before he was a poet."¹³ She notes Blake's changes in heart about Swedenborg between the robust satire of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) and the praise of Swedenborg's imagery in the *Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), but having decided that there was no literary value in Swedenborg's symbols, Raine frees herself to explore the effect which the underpinning Swedenborgian notions of "influx" and "correspondence" had on Blake.

However there are problems in her account of Blake's relationship with Swedenborg, for it is pure conjecture that Blake was brought up in a Swedenborgian household. Although it was the case that Blake was born in the year of Swedenborg's Second Coming, the latter's works were not translated into English until 1778, when Blake was 21. Whether his father had read them in Latin

is unknown but unlikely. Also Raine's claim that Blake joined the Swedenborg church in 1789 is doubted by both Foster Damon and Erdman¹⁴. In that Blake was almost certainly never an active Swedenborgian it would seem to be more heuristic to study the reasons behind Blake's change of heart on the subject of Swedenborg between 1790 and 1809, than to map Neoplatonism onto Blake through "influx" and "correspondence".

In this cause we should begin with a look at the annotations to Swedenborg's *Divine Love*¹⁵, which Keynes dates at 1789¹⁶ and its relationship to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* which was written between 1789 and 1793.

It is customary to read *The Marriage* as an exposition of Blake's philosophy in the light of the statement Blake himself made at the age of fourteen that he had rejected conventional philosophy. Bearing this in mind, we can read this philosophical tract as following Raine's suggestion that Blake began by satirising Swedenborg but came to understand the implications of his work in later life and reversed his negative judgement. As such, one would read Blake's annotation to the frontispiece of *Divine Love*:

Good to others or benevolent Understanding can & does Work harm
Ignorantly but never can the Truth be evil because Man is only Evil _17

to mean that the underlying "Truth" cannot perform evil acts because "Evil" belongs to "Man" alone. From this reading it follows that Blake's *Marriage* must be an attempt to marry Man's Evil to spiritual Good (the "Truth" of the Swedenborg annotation) in order to make "Man" good. If this were the argument of *The Marriage*, Blake's criticism of Swedenborg would be read as a criticism of Swedenborg's relying on the same form as that of traditional morals to bring about this marriage of "Man's Evil" and the "Truth". As such, *The Marriage* would

be a criticism of systems in general, and not of the substance of Swedenborg's marriage of Good and Evil. Raine would read:

Good & Evil are both Good & the two contraries Married ¹⁸

as evidence that Blake actually approved of Swedenborg's underlying principles, as on plate 3 of *The Marriage* Blake makes the affirmation that:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence

Raine's Blake may now return with impunity to Swedenborg in 1809 and praise his visions as "foundations of grand things"¹⁹. For here the foundations are the all important thing, as the foundation of Blake's philosophy is the same as Swedenborg's: the married contrary; the foundations of "influx" and "correspondence" on which Kathleen Raine bases her Neoplatonization of Blake.

One could, however, read the relation between Swedenborg and *The Marriage* in a completely different way. By beginning with the idea that contraries are necessary for progression, we can also note that Blake has coloured the word "Contraries" on plate 3 dark blue so as to stand out from the rest of the page. The style of print and colour are reminiscent of the words "Heaven" and "Hell" on the title page, and completely at odds with the red, curlicued execution of the word "Marriage" on the same page.²⁰ This might perhaps make us aware that Blake did not want us to conflate the ideas of 'Marriage' and 'Contrary'. As we saw above, the "Contrary" is made up of 'Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate', but it is immediately shown to be different from the idea of the metaphysical separation between body and soul:

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors

- 1 That Man has two real existing principles _ Viz: a Body & a Soul
- 2 That Energy called Evil is alone from the Body & that Reason, called Good, is alone from the Soul
- 3 That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies ²¹

Here we can clearly see that the error of the Bible and all sacred codes is the metaphysical division of separating energy/body from reason/soul, to follow only reason which, the one lacking its contrary, will lead to stasis rather than progression. Following these errors, the Ancient Poets (*The Marriage Plate 11*) built their systems and enslaved themselves and others to this separation of body and soul in order to protect themselves from supposed eternal torment by following reason alone to 'Good'. And this is exactly what Swedenborg does. He writes:

Man is only a recipient of Life From this Cause it is, that Man, from his own hereditary Evil, reacts against God: but so far as he believes that all his Life is from God, and every Good of Life from the Action of God, and the Evil of Life from the Reaction of Man, Reaction thus becomes correspondent with Action, and Man acts with God as from himself ²²

This passage seems to be suggesting that the good of life comes from the action of God, and the evil from man's reaction against God. If however, man believes in God, which is to say in Good coming from God, his reaction will correspond with God, and will become good. Only in this way can man avoid eternal evil, by bringing heaven to earth in the closure of metaphysics.

But it was to this paragraph of *Divine Wisdom* that Blake appended "Good & Evil are here both Good & the two contraries Married". Thus we can see that

this "Marriage" of man to the good of God is not the progression which "Contraries" give to Human Existence, it is the eradication of one of the halves of the "Contrary" to produce a unity (which is always good) and thus will be static. Now we can see that Blake is condemning the system builders as they attempt to proceed by enforcing a stasis through marriage. Thus we can re-read Blake's primary annotation to *Divine Love*:

Good to others or benevolent Understanding can & does Work harm
Ignorantly but never can the Truth be evil because Man is only Evil —

By placing the emphasis on the word "Truth", it would seem that Blake was chiding Swedenborg for making "Man" alone the source of evil. God as Truth cannot be wholly and solely Good and must contain Evil or falsity, in equal measure in order to be a contrary and progress.

Thus we can see that it is for the making static of truth in the formation of a system by marriage that Blake criticizes Swedenborg's New Church as it:

conversed with Angels who are all religious. & conversed not with
Devils who all hate religion²³

Contraries require that both parts, both elements, Good and Evil exist in balance with each other rather than as one cancelling out the other, in order for there to be progress.

And thus we can conjecture at the reason why Blake came back to Swedenborg in 1809. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* set itself up as a criticism of Swedenborg and all who drew up systems. As we saw above, *The Marriage* claimed that all these systems were based on the same foundational errors: all were attempting to marry Heaven and Hell to produce a static Good in the

removal of Evil. But this is exactly what Blake did himself in the setting up of the new philosophy of *The Marriage* as his rejection of conventional philosophy. *The Marriage* marked all that had gone before as wrong, or Evil, and attempted thereby to cast it out, to destroy it; although his new system had set out the necessity of their Evil in equal proportion to its Good in order that there be any progression.

Throughout the rest of Raine's *Blake and Tradition*, we can follow the same move by the critic to reduce Blake's Contraries to the Marriage that is typical of a static metaphysics based upon a bedrock of certain, if forgotten, truth. However, a close study of other views of Blake's attitude towards the Neoplatonists will show that this is not the only way to understand this relationship, and will itself set up the Contrary as the best way to understand Blake's ambiguous writing. Furthermore, this will lead on to show that if Blake is anti-metaphysical, his position is a complex one and changed during his lifetime between acceptance and rejection, openness and closure.

Notes:

- 1 - Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, 2 vols (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), I, p.xxv. [Cited as B&T].
- 2 - Ibid. p.xxv/xxvi.
- 3 - Ibid. p.xxv.
- 4 - Prophet - One who speaks for God or any deity, as the inspired revealer or interpreter of his will. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)
- 5 - B&T, I, p.xxvi.
- 6 - Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G.E.M.Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968). [Cited as PI]
- 7 - PI, paragraph 289.
- 8 - See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. by G.E.M.Anscombe and Denis Paul (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), paragraph 675, written a few days before he died.
- 9 - Although taken by Raine as deriving from Jakob Boehme, this remark, a datum of occult philosophy, actually derives from Hermes Trismegistus, a divine who popularised Platonism in the third century AD.
- 10 - B&T, I, p.xviii.
- 11 - Ibid. p.xix.
- 12 - Ibid. p.3.
- 13 - Ibid. p.3.
- 14 - In S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, 2nd edn (Providence R.I.: Brown University, 1967), p.372, Foster Damon writes: "On April 13th 1789, Blake and his wife signed the attendance sheet at the open conference [of the New Church]; he then procured and annotated the *Divine Love*, and the next year the *Divine Providence*. But he resisted all efforts to persuade him to join the Church." [This work cited as Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*].

In David V. Erdman, *Prophet against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of his Own Times*, 3rd edn (Princeton: Princeton University, 1977), p. 142, Erdman writes: "Blake, always a scorner of sectaries, quite evidently did not join those ceremonially inclined who were endeavoring to establish the New Church as a sect with an ordained priesthood. In 1790, when ... *Concerning Divine Providence* came out, Blake discovered the more conservative side of Swedenborg, and concluded that he was after all a *Spiritual Predestinarian*, supported by *Lies & Priestcraft*." [This work cited as PAE].

15 - K 89.

16 - See introduction to William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* - reproduction in its original size of William Blake's *Illuminated Book*, with Introduction and Commentary by Sir Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University, 1975). In K, Keynes suggests that the annotations date from 1790.

17 - K 89.

18 - K 91.

19 - K 581.

20 - The copy which shows this colouration is in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, and is the published facsimile mentioned in note 16. Unfortunately I have had no access to other original copies of this text to see if this is typical.

21 - *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 4.

22 - K 91.

23 - *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 22.

Chapter 3 - Blake's Supposed Neoplatonism.

As Plato looks over the shoulder of his master Socrates writing at his desk, in the frontispiece of Matthew Paris's *Prognostica Socratis basilei*¹, so we might consider that Plotinus looks over the shoulder of Plato, Swedenborg over the shoulder of Plotinus, and, according to Raine, Blake over the shoulder of Swedenborg. For this is the movement of traditional metaphysics resting upon the Cave Myth of Socrates in Plato's *Republic*. The philosopher is the one who can be free of the chains of belief in the appearance of the world and faces its hidden realness.

But if one can retrace the steps made in history towards the first myth, perhaps to find the source of Swedenborg's 'influx' and 'correspondence' in the 'Oneness' and the 'Intelligible World' of Plotinus, and the 'ideal' and 'philosophy' of Socrates, one is paradoxically moving forward at the same time. Or at least one would have the illusion of progress. Kathleen Raine's *Blake and Tradition* is undoubtedly a progressive step in understanding Blake's work as another attempt to fulfil the Socratic *logos* and to make philosophers of us all in our reading of Blake. But following the argument in the last chapter, we may now suggest that this double movement, moving backwards to move forwards in history, can be seen as the process of conflation - Marriage - of evil and good to attempt a static description of the world as wholly good. Perhaps this is why the movement forwards in history must be balanced by a movement back to the source, the *logos*. The double step, forwards and backwards being seen as the opening up of metaphysics whose closure is promised at the futural second coming.

Taking the next step back from Blake as a reader of Swedenborg, Kathleen Raine finds the influence of the history of the Socratic *logos* in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* as that of Plotinus. In these poems she discovers

the soul becoming impure through its preoccupation with sensible forms, using the symbolic dictionary of "cloud", "mire", "clay" and "dew" as material things which cover the "child" that is the soul. Following the Porphyryne cycle, these symbols "will vanish when the soul has learned to look upon the face of God unveiled"² and the child returns to paradise.

It is this revelation of the *Songs* which Raine finds influences the rest of Blake's poetry from *The Book of Thel* to *Jerusalem*. That this is not obvious from clear reference in Blake's poetry, Raine counters with the suggestion that:

He did not name his gods from Greek mythology, and this fact has obscured the extent of his borrowing from their stories³

In this assertion, Kathleen Raine finds some support and some criticism. John Anthony Witreich suggests that her account of Blake's debt to the Neoplatonic source is "disappointing", and cites Jean Hagstrum's idea that she should rather have chosen the influences of Milton, the Bible, Michaelangelo and Raphael to fulfil this role⁴. But this is merely to replace the abstraction of Raine's metaphysical tradition with a more concrete foundation of Blake's poetic and pictorial sources, which, drawn from outside Blake's own work, still remains within the framework of traditional metaphysics. Hagstrum's reappraisal might seem to lend more depth to Blake's writing, but does so only by leaving a set of arbitrary accretions (where any set of likely candidates would perform the same function) upon the same myth structure which Raine presents in its skeletal form.

Support, direct and indirect, for the Neoplatonism of Blake abounds. Ms Raine cites George Mills Harper's *Book on the subject*⁵, and F.A.C. Wilson's account of the Neoplatonism of W.B. Yeats, as books which make her idea seem less novel, but even Northrop Frye noticed an important Neoplatonic strain in

Blake. Amid all the references to Plato in *Fearful Symmetry*⁶, there are only three to the Neoplatonists; nevertheless, Frye's position on Blake's Neoplatonism is not straightforward.

At one point, Frye suggests that Blake is at odds with Neoplatonism:

Porphyry speaks of his master Plotinus as having four times in his life,
with great effort and relentless discipline, achieved a direct
apprehension of God. Blake says: I am in God's presence night & day, /
And he never turns his face away.⁷

Frye would have it that this places Blake as a "spiritual utilitarian", where the spiritual world acts as a source of inspiration rather as a river (spirit world) is harnessed to turn a water wheel (material world). This constant interaction of spiritual power and the poet is obviously opposed to the idea that spirit descends to the experience of earth and returns purified.

In another part of the same book, Frye suggests that Porphyry's *De Antro Nympharum* is a source of Blake's symbolism for the two entrances to Beulah⁸. Here, although Blake might be using ideas taken directly from the Neoplatonic, Frye is at odds with Kathleen Raine's position on this point, for as we have seen above she suggests that Blake did not delve for source material in the Neoplatonists, but took only their grounding metaphysics.

The third reference to Neoplatonism is more supportive of Raine's position:

The lower half of the mystical system of Plotinus is very similar to Blake's. In Plotinus the Man is a single mental unit, yet also a unit of a single world-spirit; and the recognition of this universal spirit in material things is the source of beauty.⁹

In this step, which simplifies Neoplatonism, Frye is foisting the same idealising move upon Blake as Raine, binding him up in the return to the *logos* of the spirit world through the beauty of his poetry and designs. But, though the upper circle of Plotinus' cycle is removed so as to avoid the pitfall of placing Blake as a thorough-going mystic who requires an initiation into the understanding of arcane knowledge, this position does not sit well with Frye's other two references to Neoplatonism.

For, if the material world was harnessed to the spirit world like a water wheel in a river, this does not imply any necessity that it is only beauty which can lead to recognition of the universal¹⁰. Frye's suggestion that Blake saw the spiritual world as a *continuous* source of energy could not lead to such a one sided pragmatics, but to one which covered the whole spectrum of what was available to use be it good or bad. Furthermore, if Blake's poetry and designs were directly comprehensible through the act of recognition of the universal spirit in the depiction of beauty, there would be no need for Frye to make the exegesis on *De Antro Nympharum* concerning the number of entrances to Beulah, for it would be directly comprehensible to all.

From a complex stance on Neoplatonism we may now turn to two more simple views. David Erdman's account of Blake's Neoplatonism is reduced to a mention at the end of a footnote:

Comparative study (See Harper's *Neoplatonism of Blake*) sheds valuable light on Blake's machinery - e.g. on his use of the Persephone and Bacchus myths - if relatively little on his own thought.¹¹

Here, Erdman leads us back to the notion that Blake privileged certain Neoplatonic myths as source material, and as such he differs from Raine's view:

but he differs further in that he does not accept that these make up any great part of Blake's thought. This conclusion is the only one possible in his socio-historical account of Blake's writing, which as we saw above, Raine rejects as a fragmenting method of reading. To see the repeated functioning of myths in writing is a unifying move, thus Erdman must account for the use of these myths as a method of progression (machinery) rather than as a hidden grain of truth which acts as a unifying element.

Harold Bloom's earlier account of Blake also reduces Neoplatonism to a single brief mention in his account of *The Book of Thel*¹². As in Frye, this takes the form of the use of Porphyry as the progenitor of the allegory, where "the descent of the soul" in his account of *The Cave of the Naiades* from Homer stands as the *logos* behind any understanding of this poem. But as with Erdman, the myth is not taken as some germ of the truth; rather, its single application is but a step on the way to truth which comes in the apocalypse at the end of *Jerusalem*. In this way we can see that Bloom takes up a position directly opposed to Raine, for here, although the myth of the Cave of the Naiades is read as the allegory of the descent of the soul in *The Book of Thel*, the whole of Bloom's exegesis of Blake concerns the journey towards "the liberty of all things" which "is to be human."¹³ The "entire vision" for Bloom is not the single myth stripped bare, but its fleshing out on the journey towards the presentation of the possibility of word and vision becoming one where the mind directly creates space and time.

In this way, we may see Bloom and Erdman are allied, if not in substance then in approach. Each finds an important place for myth in Blake, as does Raine, but rather than taking the myth for the concrete truth, follow its *functioning* as the truth of the matter. For Erdman, the functioning of the Persephone and Bacchic myths are the "mechanics" of Blake's texts, whereas socio-political liberty

is the end. For Bloom, Porphyry's myths come to Blake through Spenser's "Garden of Adonis" and place him as another writer of his age, using the available tools to confront the problem of the salvation of language.

Here we seem to have begun to define an opposition between the approaches to Blake of Kathleen Raine on the one hand and David Erdman and Harold Bloom on the other. Raine's approach is to reduce every stage of Blake's development to the schema of the myth of the descending soul which rises again from the material world, and Erdman and Bloom follow a loose application of the same myth throughout the whole of Blake's work. For Raine, this is the finding of the same "entire vision" in "the great *terra incognita* of the Prophetic Books" as was revealed in the Songs. For Erdman and Bloom it is to take the whole of Blake's work as a vision of the journey towards purity of some kind outside the text. Thus we can see that while both elements of the opposition utilize the same myth, Raine privileges a static reading of the myth as Truth, and Bloom and Erdman, the action of the myth as history.

If we return to Northrop Frye's complex and problematic account of Blake's Neoplatonism, we can see that it partakes of both elements of this opposition. For the idea that the *beauty* of Blake's poetry leads directly to the apprehension of the universal spirit and occurs at every moment of poetry's beauty agrees with Raine, whereas the idea that Blake trawled Greek mythology simply for source material and used such material mechanically as part of the process of producing other effects agrees with Erdman and Bloom. There can be no conventional resolution to this opposition, and in *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye does not offer us any. However, in the collection of papers he edited in 1966¹⁴ Frye suggests that further specialized study is the only method of approach to Blake's varied interests. This seems to offer some sort of resolution, for he writes:

In this situation [that all Blake criticism must be specialised] the best I can do is to give the sense of a busy and widespread body of criticism *in process*.

The busyness of process across the whole spectrum of approaches to Blake is necessary because Frye suggests that "Blake's total range of interests is so enormous that nobody can cover more than a small corner of it."¹⁵ In this way, Frye accepts Raine's idea of the totalizing myth motivating Blake's work, but balks at the job of making that totalization as too much for one critic. But by doing so, Frye must also accept Erdman and Bloom's mechanistic approach to the application of the myth as history because of the necessity of specialism.

To make this point more clearly, we can draw an analogy of understanding as a grid of interconnecting information moving through time. For Raine, this grid is stable and complete and its skeleton was mapped out somewhere in time before written history. Progress cannot change the grid and everything is understood through reference to it. In the case of Bloom and Erdman, the grid is unstable and changes with time. Borrowings from past literature are useful for moving forwards, but they are always distorted in their reuse as the endpoint of perfection is approached as the end of history.

Frye's combination of the two is possible because both theories employ an open metaphysics which predict their own closure at some future time. The difference between them is therefore seen to be that whereas for Raine, the configuration of real and perceived is carried at all times although hidden; in Bloom and Erdman's accounts, the final point is not predictable as understanding changes until it reaches that point through a process of purification. Thus, while keeping to the common point of an open metaphysics whose closure is predicted, Frye presents Blake criticism as being unable to comprehend all ways of

understanding *all at once*¹⁶. For this reason, his combination of these two apparently disparate readings suggests that Raine's stable grid of understanding is *hidden* because it cannot be comprehended at one time as it is so complex, and appears to be *unstable* and *changeable* because of this same complexity. Only if one were completely conversant with all the different approaches to Blake all at one time could one see understanding as stable, which is why it appears to be hidden.

But on this point Frye's combination of the two readings of Blake falls back upon Raine's. The fact that Frye withholds the possibility of there being a *world's greatest authority on Blake*¹⁷ means that even with the hope of the future closure of metaphysics, it will never be certain when the whole myth will have been divulged. Thus Frye's call for more and more work to be done on Blake will always rest upon the belief in a unity that can never be known for certain, that metaphysics can never be closed. Thus although we have what appears to be a Blakean Contrary in the combination of opposing ways of understanding Blake it turns out to be another Marriage between unified truth and process in which process is relegated to insignificance.

It is a criticism of the certainty of the unveiling of unified truth as futural, that Edward Larrissy suggests is Blake's project in his book *William Blake*¹⁸. Rather than working from a standpoint of Blake's Neoplatonism or use of Neoplatonist mechanisms, he suggests that Blake's poetry produced a *revision* of Neoplatonism. He draws this conclusion from an argument about the ambiguity of *bound* in Blake. Larrissy points out that sometimes *bound* as line appears to be expressive of form, and at other times, *bound* as moral code is seen to be constricting and against Blake's delight in the energy and boundlessness of this world.

As in Frye's reading of Blake, we can see that the first sense of *bound* suggests Raine's view of Blake's project, as the search for the true line will define the perfection of all forms; and the second suggests Bloom and Erdman's view of Blake because *bound* as moral code suggests a mechanism towards an undefinable goal. But rather than taking the future closure of metaphysics as Blake's goal, the revision of Neoplatonism which Larrissy suggests is based on the idea that "Imagination is Blake's firm point of departure".¹⁹ As such, Imagination denies the possibility of an abstract or unknowable for it is the relation of abstract thoughts to man. Thus, Larrissy can conclude that through the imagination of the visionary "the infinite contains bounded forms"²⁰ which marks the compatibility of the two ways of understanding *bound*. Here, the revision of Neoplatonism conflates the dualism of the unified spirit world with the objectiveness of the material world, and regards both as constitutive elements of Imagination.

But while this argument avoids the problem of uncertainty in the future closure of metaphysics, it must instead predict no possible closure of metaphysics, and thus becomes a more refined version of Erdman and Bloom's argument. For Larrissy's position is based upon a conviction that Imagination in Blake's work was "very much part of contemporary history, not some arbitrary juggling of abstruse terms".²¹ However, this use of history as a tapestry into which thought is inextricably woven, while denying the possibility of a unifying element, also denies a future goal, either socio-political or mystical, in which direction the mechanism of history is aimed. Larrissy backs up his position with a quote from Julia Kristeva which casts light on the reason why this is the case:

The form of the relation (between unity and process) consists in the privileging of the unifying instance (the instance which established the

coherence of the sign, and of the system and of sociality) at the expense of the process, which then becomes relegated to the sidelines under the heading of madness, holiness, or poetry²²

In the present context this gives reasons against following Northrop Frye's approach to Blake, for the belief in the static myth misses out on the poetry of Blake's writing by reducing his oeuvre to yet another expression of the legitimacy of social and systematic repression inherent in the fixity of the *logic* sign. The term *repression* being apt because of the relegation of the manifestations of process to the sidelines in the unifying function of the *logos*.

But Larrissy's step is taken at as great expense as Frye's privileging of unity, for to be taken it must privilege the world of *appearances* in order that process is not ossified into unity. Larrissy writes:

For [Blake] the world of appearances is the only real world, as long as it is filled with imagination²³

We saw above how the rider "as long as it is filled with imagination" functions to fill the infinite with bounded forms. However, this reading is now beset by the problem of phenomenological *intentionality* and the *epoché* set up by Husserl and extended by Heidegger and Derrida. The problem with this position is that it always withholds the threshold of its closure as an infinite deferral. Thus, the repression of the unifying sign is replaced by the repression of indefinite free play: the repression consonant with never knowing for certain at any moment, rather than whether or not the goal has been reached. As such, it could be seen as yet another Marriage, in that it is the conflation of the sign with the movement of the process of the sign's functioning, thereby eradicating all stability from

language and perception. In this way it is the opposite of Frye's *Marriage* we saw above.

We saw in the previous chapter that rather than *Marriage*, Blake's poetry would suggest *Contrary* which could privilege neither process nor static myth. Thus we might consider a reading of Blake in a Blakean way as using both Frye's and Larrissy's position. For Larrissy's position, in that it infinitely defers the fruition of meaning, is always parasitic upon a vestigial unifying principle - in this case contemporary history. And Frye's unity is always parasitic upon the writers of the new generation "looking over the shoulder" of those of the prior generation to progress back to the truth hidden in the myth structure. That each rests upon a vestige of the other, suggests that to produce a *Contrary* view would be to use each of these views in equal proportion.

In this case we must replace both the search for the truthful myth and the study of the functioning of the myth with a conglomerate way of understanding myth. And this seems to be suggested in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* plate 11:

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses,
calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of
woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, Nations, and whatever their
enlarged and numerous senses could perceive..... Till a system was
formed, which some took advantage of & enslaved the vulgar by
attempting to realise or abstract the mental deities from their objects.

Frye would perhaps read this as an account of the truth of the world being slowly lost in the endless Aristotelian metaphors of linguistic signs. The transferability of meaning between words hides the truth of how things really are, and leads to false steps in religion and morality, which can be stripped away by further study

to reveal the truth in all its glory and goodness. Larrissy would perhaps read this to show Blake's concern with the onset of the repressive hegemonies and their attempts at self justification.

Without diminishing the importance of either of these readings, this section of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* could also be said to be a description of how a myth is made. We could read it as being not singularly concerned either with the substance of the myth or its functioning as a motive force in history. The senses of the ancient poets hide the seed of truth in writing, (the seed that is no more than the logically prior Immediate Experience), but with the political enforcement of the system of the single way in which they saw the world, the directness of perceptions, which is the same for all people, becomes lost in the enforcement of the system. With Immediate Experience placed in doubt by a politicized comparison with the way the ancients saw the world, their view of the world gains ascendancy over people as some hidden truth. And becomes myth.

As such the myth becomes a foundation for many other ideas to which it is in no way related. Who in ancient Greece could have thought that a whole school of psychoanalysis would be based upon the story of King Oedipus? But this does not mean that the myth, as accretion of differing interpretations about some core, necessarily hides a universal truth about human psychology, nor that psychoanalysis is necessarily a mode of political repression through the definition of madness it provides, and of sane behaviour it imposes. Neither reading is completely satisfactory for a close study of the Oedipus story itself has an element of its own becoming a myth.

Before his death Oedipus claims that Theseus will win the war with Thebes so long as he keeps the place of his burial a secret. When Theseus does win the battle, the power of the mystery grows: Oedipus seems to have spoken truth from the grave because his prophecy has come true and his words become a "mental

deity'. His story is therefore more likely to be plundered for other signs and portents than another where a prediction has not come to fruition. Thus we can see that Oedipus' words do not necessarily have to suggest a universal truth to become hallowed as truth bearing. Furthermore, the story comes down to us only as Sophocles chose to write Oedipus' story because it was one through which the former glory of Athens could perhaps be regained at the time he wrote it. Nevertheless the mechanism of the story - of Oedipus and his mother - remains as well as a suitable base myth for unifying Freud's disparate case by case psychological histories. In this way, the prophetic and truth bearing element of the story acts upon the mechanism of the story, keeping both alive and meaningful.

This interrelatedness of motives might seem to suggest the relevance of a Foucauldian *archaeological* approach to an understanding of Blake's Contraries. We can see this in Frye's call for further digging to unearth a unified truth, rather as Freud found a single story which would account for all his observations. In the same way, Larrissy's reading describes Blake's search through his own history, rather as Sophocles wrote the Oedipus story to bring back glory to Athens in a low point of its history. Thus a direct combination of these two approaches could be seen as something like Foucault's archaeology which discovers the technique of the functioning of subjectivity by considering the effect of the reading upon the 'archeologist' who reads Blake during the process of that reading. This combination approach is close to that in which we will find Blake himself engaged in the transformational writing of *Milton* and *Jerusalem*; but Foucault's method of study is not feasible when dealing with a single writer as its operation is across traditions. For this reason, it will be more heuristic to approach Blake in his own terms, or rather in his own term - *Contrary*.

But before we turn to a closer look at the source and functioning of Contraries in Blake's texts we must first address the question of the epistemology which could support them, and this is best seen through a closer study of the relationship of his writing with Plato.

Notes:

1 - This picture is the cover photograph of Jacques Derrida, *Post Card - From Freud to Socrates and Beyond* trans. by Alan Bass. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987).

2 - B&T, I, p. 10.

3 - Ibid. p. 69.

4 - John Anthony Wittreich, 'Opening the Seals', in *Blake's Sublime Allegory*, ed. by S. Curran and J.A. Wittreich (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1973), p. 24.

5 - George Mills Harper, *The Neoplatonism of William Blake* (London: Oxford University, 1961). This book will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

6 - Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1947).

7 - Ibid. p.8.

8 - Ibid. p.232.

9 - Ibid. p.154.

10 - Compare with the predictable unpredictability of a multi supplied water wheel.

11 - PAE, p.177.

12 - Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse* (New York: Cornell University, 1963), p.63.

13 - Ibid. p.433.

14 - Frye, 1966.

15 - Ibid. p.1

16 - cf. Descartes on the understanding of reading

17 - Opp cit. p.1.

18 - Edward Larrissy, *William Blake* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

19 - Ibid. p.86.

20 - Ibid. p.87.

21 - Ibid. p.87.

22 - Ibid. p.88.

23 - Ibid. p.88.

CHAPTER 4 - Blake's Contrary.

An epistemology which could support an idea of truth at the same time as accounting for the variations in language must be both rigid and flexible. It must account for the process of the functioning of language without ending up in infinite deferral, at the same time as addressing the static values of truth whilst still allowing for developments and changes in meaning. If Blake's epistemology fulfilled both of these requirements, as is suggested by the Contrary, it would be unique in the history of philosophy as Eliot suggested it was. It would also account for the reason why Blake could be read successfully in both the methods of Frye and Larrissy that were discussed in the previous chapter.

To discover what Blake's epistemology might be has usually entailed its comparison with other epistemologies, and attempts to fit it into various different metaphysical frameworks. As we have seen, this has resulted in Frye's call for more and more specialized work to be undertaken on Blake, and Larrissy's claims that Blake was not a pure Neoplatonist but a reviser of its process. Furthermore if Blake's epistemology *does* have both paradigm epistemologies embedded in it, we could account for why all previous attempts have hitherto been unsatisfactory in accounting for all its aspects. But the problem then remains to describe his epistemology without making value judgements upon it in accordance as to whether Blake was or was not more or less a follower of whichever epistemology at different times in his life. For in common with George Mills Harper, most readers of Blake have hitherto worked on the principle that:

Blake does have a system, and it is meaningful in terms of the ideas of his day or we might as well consign him, however regretfully, to the family of egocentrics whose interpretations of human experience are too purely personal to be valuable.¹

But this is only comprehensible in conjunction with the grounding statement of Harper's book:

I want to recognize, in the beginning, that Blake was a slave to no man's system: if he had been, we would have long ago lost faith in him as a creative artist of universal insight.²

and only then if we understand Blake as having absorbed the ideas of his day and transformed them with his creativity to become his own while the ideas themselves nevertheless partook of some unquestioned universal. From what we have already seen of Blake's Contrary we must be wary of any position which separates out a system with reference to a universal. For we can see that the claim that we can only give value to something as being the work of a single genius in respect to the degree of universality of its insight marries the subjective to the objective, whereas the Contrary approach would give equal weight to subject and object. Thus, with Harper, our whole approach to Blake's work might easily eradicate the uniqueness of that work in the methodology of that approach.

To shed more light on this problem, and in so doing illuminate Blake's metaphysics, we shall consider in detail Harper's account of Blake's relationship to Plato's metaphysics, for Harper's account, like Larrissy's, embeds Blake into his history but, like Frye, gives it truth value only to the extent that the system he unearths from Blake 'is meaningful in terms of the ideas of his day'.³ The choice of Plato with which to compare Blake has been made by several other critics, and is an obvious one because of the large number of references to Platonic writing in Blake, and has led to the general understanding that Blake accepted Platonism from about 1783 and shifted away from it in 1804.

The mechanism of Harper's account of the Neoplatonism of Blake is to base its argument on the influence on Blake of the work of his contemporary, Thomas Taylor, the first translator of the complete works of Plato into English. This argument gains much from the fact that Taylor published *The Cratylus, Phaedo, Parmenides and Timaeus* in 1793, which presented the *Timaeus* for the first time in English. To this information, Harper enrols the support of Foster Damon, who suggests that "*The Book of Urizen* is steeped in the *Timaeus*"⁴; and the fact that Taylor gave lectures on Platonic philosophy at Flaxman's house in 1784, "and it would be straining credulity too far to suppose that Blake was not there"⁵. That the *Complete Works of Plato* was published in 1804, with its extensive preface and "copious notes by the translator" also gives fuel to the argument. Although this information may seem at odds with the title of his book, Harper's argument is completed by the fact that:

Taylor himself has little originality as either a philosopher or a commentator: the interpretations of Plato which are scattered in the notes of some sixty volumes of translations from the Greek and Latin are primarily those of the Neoplatonists, especially Plotinus and Proclus.

This would suggest that if Blake had read and absorbed the ideas of Taylor, his view would be Neoplatonic rather than purely Platonist.

Like Raine, Harper makes comparisons between Blake and the sources he read, but instead of following through the poems in order of their composition, he looks for both themes and philosophical insights. We have already discussed the problems of a Neoplatonic understanding of Blake in the previous chapter, and now we may concentrate on the philosophical insights.

These insights are supposed to follow from Blake's holding the Neoplatonic belief that "poetry is a philosophy, ancient in time, metrical in Harmony, and mythological in design".⁶ To this, Harper sees Blake making a single revision in that he reversed the subordination of poetry to philosophy because truth could only be apprehended by vision and not by reason. Thus Blake is placed in the middle of the contemporary struggle against Locke and the Deists on the side of those who wanted a return to the notion that God gave men their reason directly, and thus reason did not have to be apprehended by a study of nature. This would be to put Blake on the side of the Romantics, with their transcendentalism and celebration of the self.

But following the idea that Blake's subjective genius must be objectively validated, Harper suggests that:

Blake changed his position so frequently - oftentimes for a calculated ambiguity - that we should be very hesitant to accept any statement at its face value without attempting to place it in a significant context in time or history.⁷

We can see that this is motivated from Harper's proposal of "Blake's indebtedness ... to the Romantic revival"⁸, and that his whole case derives from his prior imposition of the Neoplatonic mystical framework upon Blake. In other words, that Blake can only be understood by those who are initiated into the (Eleusinian) mysteries whose transcendental lie behind the face values of his words. Thus we can see before we start that the whole account must lead inexorably to the conviction that Blake was a Taylorian Neoplatonist who lapsed (though not completely) at the end of his "twenty dark years". But this is not the only problem with the suggestion, for Harper is so single minded as to his goal

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that he becomes less than rigorous in the discussion of the contexts to which he demands such careful adherence.

It is therefore, Blake's ambiguity raised to the status of an aesthetic principle by which Harper argues Blake's Neoplatonism, and validates his poetic search for universal truths. Thus when reading Blake's last letter to Trusler, Harper understands Blake's words 'That which can be made explicit to the idiot is not worth my care.'⁹ as consequent to Blake's belief with Taylor that it is utterly absurd that:

All moral and theological knowledge ... must be apprehended by the
most careless inspection ¹⁰

It is however equally possible to read this letter at face value as a stream of abuse in response to the carping of Blake's patron at pictures Blake thought very fine ¹¹ This would seem to be a more likely reading of the letter of an artist who was known to have a violent temper,¹² faced with criticism of his work, than a reasoned philosophical argument about Greek metaphysics. Also, if we look carefully at two of the sentences from the first paragraph of the same letter, they seem to argue the opposite of that which Harper suggests.

You say I want somebody to Elucidate my ideas. But you ought to know
that What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men.

Here, although it is possible to argue that Blake is following the illuminatus doctrine, it seems more likely that Blake is mocking Trusler. For if Trusler needs somebody to elucidate Blake's design, this very fact makes it necessary that Trusler should know that what is grand is obscure for he is one of the 'Weak men' in that he needs Blake's ideas elucidating.

Let us further consider the argument behind the reading of this letter in the Neoplatonic way, which is that the ambiguity of the surface of a text is necessary to hide the sublimity of truth from the ordinary people. Taylor states this was:

A custom not originating from a wish to become tyrants in knowledge,
and keep the multitude in ignorance, but from a profound conviction
that the sublimest truths are profaned when clearly unfolded to the
vulgar.¹³

However, this is a completely opposing argument to that which we saw on Plate 11 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where Blake criticises the ancients who tyrannised not only the vulgar but also themselves by building systems which would hide the fact that all deities reside in the human breast.

The rest of the evidence for Harper's thesis all comes from after 1804 as argument that Blake could never completely give up Platonism because Plato's "Theory of Reminiscence ... in some form or other constitutes the metaphysical base for the philosophical idealism of the Romantic movement".¹⁴ The field of this argument is wide, apparently demonstrative of Blake's calculated ambiguity. It ranges from Blake's Annotations to Reynolds:

Reynolds thinks man Learns everything he knows. I say on the Contrary
that Man Brings All that he has or can have into the world with him. Man
is Born Like a Garden Ready Planted & Sown. This World is too poor to
produce one Seed.¹⁵

which suggests that Blake was a thoroughgoing Platonist, to the Annotation to Wordsworth:

Imagination has nothing to do with Memory.¹⁶

which suggests the opposite. Hence we can see the need for accuracy to context.

In evidence of Blake's continued acceptance of Greek literature and aesthetics "as he understood them through Plato's interpreters and popularizers"¹⁷ as late as 1820, Harper cites one of the annotations to Berkeley's *Siris* as:

"Reality" — "is its Imaginative Form," and neither Plato nor Pythagoras would have disagreed with that.¹⁸

But if we look at the whole context, we can see that Blake is making a comment about Qualities and Things. Berkeley writes:

The perceptions of sense are gross: but even in the senses there is a great difference. Though harmony and proportion are not objects of sense, yet the eye and the ear are organs, which offer to the mind such materials, by means whereof, she may apprehend both the one and the other.¹⁹

Here we can see that although Berkeley was a harsh critic of Locke's abstract ideas, he too proposes harmony and proportion as being abstracted for they are derived from the ear and eye and become factors in any other perceptions by the action of the mind. Thus we should be aware of the specificity of Blake's complete annotation to this paragraph:

Harmony and Proportion are Qualities & Not Things. The Harmony & Proportion of a Horse are not the same with those of a Bull. Every Thing has its own Harmony & Proportion, Two Inferior Qualities in it. For its Reality is in its Imaginative Form.²⁰

Harmony and proportion are not removed from the act of looking at horse or bull, they are part of each separate act. They are not abstracted into ideas and applied to other perceptions of sense for each Thing has its own harmony and proportion. They are mundane qualities, and as such are inferior to Things as they are contained within them. Thus, Blake criticizes Berkeley for the same reason that Berkeley criticizes Locke. Bearing this criticism of Berkeley in mind, the last statement cannot be understood to be concerned with Platonic Ideal Forms, and suggests that Blake's epistemology comprehends reality, imagination and form in a different way.

A consideration of the next annotation to Berkeley will throw some light on what this might be. According to the Neoplatonic system, in which Harper places Blake, 'the nature of man's mind and its power of apprehension ... are in complete accord.'²¹ This derives from Taylor's assertion, with Proclus, that:

it may be inferred, that, as form is that primarily which the multitude under it is secondarily, it neither communicates with this multitude according to name only, nor is synonymous with it. If therefore, that which is characterized by unity in forms is exempt from the many, it is evident that the knowledge of intellect, which is profoundly one, is sufficient to the apprehension of the one of forms.²²

This Neoplatonism expects that the mind is already equipped with all the categories of reason, in order that it may perceive the Oneness of forms directly in the multitudes of differences which occur in nature. Thus the Theory of Forms rests entirely upon the Theory of Reminiscences, for the eye sees and the mind immediately recognizes because it has inbuilt knowledge of Forms - which is the accord between the nature of man's mind and its power of apprehension.

Thus, Harper reads Blake's "Knowledge is not by deduction but Immediate by Perception or Sense at once"²³ to fit into this framework, for mind and world partake of the same Oneness of Forms. But again Harper has taken a section out of context for this annotation goes on:

Knowledge is not by deduction, but Immediate by Perception or Sense at once. Christ addressed himself to the Man not to his Reason. Plato did not bring Life & Immortality to Light. Jesus only did this.²⁴

This denigration of Plato in the same utterance suggests quite strongly that Blake's view of Immediate Perception is not based on the idea that the Oneness of Forms is part of the mechanism of people's minds. Rather, it suggests the post-apocalyptic revelation of Jesus as the restorer of "enlarged and numerous senses"²⁵, which such systems as Plato's had hidden, is the primary element in the functioning of the mind. Thus, the mapping out of the Oneness of a system onto the mind will not reveal Truth, but instead will mark the tyranny of all unifying moves upon the directness of experience.

Harper would counter this argument by absorbing Jesus into Neoplatonism as the "all-comprehending Form"²⁶ of which Taylor writes in his introduction to the earlier publication²⁷ of the *Parmenides* as:

a certain first intellect, in itself entire and perfectly complete, in which the first and most true species of all things are contained, and which have a subsistence independent of time, place and motion.²⁸

This would seem to be born out by the definition of Jesus given at the beginning of *Milton* as:

But if we return to the first of the annotations dealt with in this chapter, we must remember that Blake criticised Berkeley for creating the abstractions of harmony and proportion out of the act of viewing a horse or a bull. Thus, to set up Jesus as something "entire, perfect and complete" and independent of "time, place and motion", would be to make an abstraction of Jesus which would fall foul of this same criticism.

Since it is the case that Blake *does* contradict himself at different times in his life, this might not be a problem, but that he makes a separation between Jesus and Plato in annotations on sequential pages of the same book of Berkeley, gives weight to the idea that Blake did not read Jesus as being Neoplatonic, or the One of Forms. In this case, Jesus as "Living Form" can but suggest the way to the Immediate Experience of Eliot, expressive of the living act of vision.

Thus, where in the Platonic we could draw up an equation between Form and Imagination as partaking of Oneness, and withhold Reality for some perfect vision of this static Oneness by the prophet, visionary or philosopher, we can now see how Blake recast these elements in his own epistemology of the living act of perceiving. Since there can be no reminiscence of the Oneness of Forms in the ephemeral act of perceiving, for this would be to abstract from the living act, the relationship between perceiver and perceived must function in a different way. The difficulty of defining this type of position, is that it could not, of course, be written down *once and for all*, as its main characteristic is that it is ephemeral and unable to be abstracted.

Thus, to look again at the two poles of Blake's epistemology - the annotations to Reynolds and Wordsworth quoted above - we can see that the way

to comprehend both together is to understand them as different viewpoints of something described *negatively* by both.

In this case, the annotation to Reynolds defines the ephemeral position in the form of a criticism of Empiricism:

Reynolds thinks man Learns everything he knows I say on the Contrary
that Man Brings All that he has or can have into the world with him Man
is Born Like a Garden Ready Planted & Sown This World is too poor to
produce one Seed

Here, the world is seen as not enough to provide the seed of imagination and Man said to have already the faculties of comprehension inborn. But since in the annotation to Wordsworth:

Imagination has nothing to do with Memory

which is a criticism of the Platonic Theory of Reminiscence, we can see that this inborn "Garden Ready Planted & Sown" is not something which can be described, as to describe it would be to abstract it from the act of perception.

In this way we can find Blake directly critical of Taylorian Platonism and to have set his work up in opposition to Plato. In the Introduction of his Complete Works of Plato, Taylor writes:

Let it be my excuse that the mistakes I have made in the *lesser particulars*, have arisen from my eagerness to seize & promulgate those *great truths* in the philosophy and theology of Plato³⁰

This quotation dramatizes the difference between Blake and Taylor. Taylor ignores the lesser particulars in favour of the great truths, while for Blake what truth there is lies in the lesser particulars:

He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars
General Good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite & flatterer,
For Art and science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars
And not in generalizing Demonstrations of the Rational Power³¹

This section from *Jerusalem* is spoken by "the voices of the Living Creatures" heard in the clouds of heaven" and sets up the question of heavenly time and eternity which Blake explores in *A Vision of the Last Judgement*. This is similar to Eliot's problems with the temporal or logical priority of Immediate Experience, but we will consider this and its effect on Blake's epistemology in Chapter 12 below. At this point, it is necessary to remember Blake's Contrary which cannot uphold an opposition such as that we have reached between Blake and Plato.

But, if Blake is critical of, he is also indebted to Plato and Taylor as the position of the *Parmenides* with regards to the rest of Plato's works gives a paradigm of contrariety. Before Benjamin Jowett's translation and commentary on the *Parmenides*³² it was usual to suggest that this text was spurious, as the view of Plato's dialogues was that they asserted certainty of the transcendental existence of the Ideas. This was Thomas Taylor's position, coming as it does from Plotinus and Proclus. However, Jowett writes that:

The anamnesis of the ideas is chiefly insisted upon in the mythical portions of the dialogues, and really occupies a very small space in the entire works of Plato³³

This is not to say that the Ideas do not take the form of universals, but Jowett does point out that the doctrine of Ideas was in constant transmutation throughout Plato's life. Thus not only can we not rely on the stereotyped form given to Ideas by Aristotle's Academy, and by them to the Neoplatonists - as Thomas Taylor did - but also, as Jowett points out, we must give full account to what follows from the fact that 'Plato is quite serious in his objections to his own doctrines'.³⁴ So we can see that as Plato does not expunge all criticism of his work from his canon, leaving the *Parmenides* as opposition to the main body of his work, in Blake's terminology, he has set up a Contrary between the two parts of his work. And Blake's debt goes still deeper.

In the *Parmenides* itself, Socrates is in conversation with the Eleatic philosopher himself, and the doctrine of Ideas is shown to lead to an infinite regression by the 'third man argument'; thus it is found to be logically unsound. Without going into the whole argument, which would be beyond the bounds of the present work, we can conclude with Jowett that the logical problem which besets Ideas is insoluble.

By anyone who separates the phenomenal from the real.³⁵

Perhaps this is Blake's greatest debt to Plato, for in his epistemology of the Contrary, the phenomenal and the real *are not separated*. If Imagination is not tethered to the temporality of memory, there is no need for anamnesis. But if the world itself is too poor to produce seed, and simple materialism cannot account for understanding, then understanding must come from elsewhere. Therefore Blake's Imagination must be a closed metaphysics of plenitude in the moment of perceiving: as an equilibrium between the world and the 'Garden ready Planted & Sown' which is the perceiver. What is real is what is perceived, and since it does

not refer to any fixed Oneness it may change from occasion to occasion according to the "Minute Particulars" of perception.

Thus we can see that Blake's epistemology is rigid, in that it accounts for absolute meaning as being completed at the moment of perception; but is flexible, as it does not impose any fixed framework onto the plenitude of the moment. Meanings are fulfilled without reference to some incompleting, or unrevealed Truth; but are free to change with time and viewpoint, from fixed truth to fixed truth.

We have already seen Blake drawing up the Contrary in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and realizing the extent of its power in *A Vision of the Last Judgement*; it now remains to tease out the path of its development into a full blown epistemology in the last three poems, *Vala or The Four Zoas*, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.

Notes:

- 1 - George Mills Harper, *The Neoplatonism of William Blake* (London: Oxford UP, 1961), p.56 [Cited as NWB]
- 2 - Ibid.
- 3 - Ibid.
- 4 - S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1924), p.166.
- 5 - Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p.397.
- 6 - NWB, p.vii.
- 7 - Ibid. p.43.
- 8 - Ibid. p.vii.
- 9 - K 793.
- 10 - *The Complete Works of Plato*, trans. by Thomas Taylor, 6 vols (London, 1804), I, p. Iviii. [This whole work cited as CWP]
- 11 - The picture, Malevolence has a close resemblance to plate 4 of *Europe*.
- 12 - Consider for instance the affair with Scholfield in the garden at Felpham.
- 13 - CWP, I, p.xxv f.
- 14 - NWB, p.63/4.
- 15 - K 471.
- 16 - K 783.
- 17 - NWB, p.35.
- 18 - Ibid.
- 19 - Bishop Berkeley, *Siris* (Dublin, 1744), p.213. Also in K 774.
- 20 - K 774.
- 21 - NWB, p.67.
- 22 - CWP, III, p.55.

23 - NWB, p.67.

24 - K 774

25 - cf. Plate 11 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

26 - NWB, p.87.

27 - A discussion of the differences between the earlier and later published forms of Taylor's translations and their effect upon our understanding of the way in which Blake saw Platonism will follow in Chapter 12 below.

28 - *The Cratylus, Phaedo, Parmenides and Timaeus* trans. by Thomas Taylor (London, 1793), p.254.

29 - K 482, NWB, p.88

30 - CWP, I, p.cxi (my italics).

31 - K 687.

32 - *The Complete Works of Plato* trans. by Benjamin Jowett, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1871).

33 - Ibid. p.632.

34 - Ibid.

35 - Ibid.

Chapter 5 - The Problem of Reading *The Four Zoas*:

Every Body Knows that this is Epicurus and Lucretius & Yet Every Body
says that it is Christian Philosophy. How is this possible?¹

If Blake can be said to have a unique epistemology along the lines we saw developing in the previous three chapters, its complexity and subtlety as well as its position vis à vis system preclude its having been drawn up or written down all at one time. Although we can trace such ideas as Contrary and Marriage to as early as 1790, the ramifications and developments which these radical epistemological tools require of the poet and artist can be followed through Blake's relationship with Taylorian Platonism to their separation from it in their flourishing in the last great works, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. As such, this would present a mammoth task but for the presence of *Vala* or *The Four Zoas*, whose evidently transformed and incomplete structure, and position between the 1804 texts and the earlier prophecies, makes it an obvious site for study of the development of Blake's ideas. But this incompleteness has also led many commentators on Blake to try to draw one particular message from the poem, either taking the poem in a supposed earlier form, or suggesting that it was a quarry or basis for the later work.

A reading which looks for meaning back in Blake's work is H.M. Margoliouth's *Vala - Blake's Numbered Text*², which finds the poem as little more than another Lambeth prophecy with the addition of the Christian symbolism of the Ninth Night. Margoliouth laments the treatment Blake gave the original poem *Vala*, and wishes the poet had published it "before his poetic idiom changed and he spoilt [it] by incongruous additions."³ Of course, Blake did not publish poems in the ordinary way, and had he engraved its one hundred and

forty or so pages, he would not perhaps have had enough time in his life to engrave the latter two. Thus, although, as Margoliouth suggests, "At the end of his life [Blake] gave the manuscript to Linnell, which shows that he wanted it kept,"⁴ he could not have thought it as important as *Milton* or *Jerusalem* to which he gave time to engrave. In this case, we could suggest that it is the incongruous additions and their relation to what was erased which are more important in understanding Blake's refining of his metaphysical position, than what the poem was to have been, or to have become if the additions had been completed.

A reading which looks forward to the later work can be found in Blackstone's *English Blake*.⁵ This reading also suggests that the first five nights are a recapitulation of the Lambeth Prophecies, but thereafter, the poem is read as concerning the re-establishment of Eternity in the renewal of the Eternal Man. As such, Blackstone suggests that the poem is not a unity, but a critique of contemporary metaphysics, psychology, religion and social order, and requires the two later poems to describe Eternity once preestablished in the new order. Thus, Blackstone reads *The Four Zoas* as conveying the energy for the mental fight necessary to bring about the creation of one's own mental system, built of the Four Great Ones that exist in every Man. This is done by erecting a system "which is inapplicable in a mechanical way as it stands"⁶, and thus needs to be reinterpreted again and again by individuals.

From this position, we can see *Milton* as Blake's personal reinterpretation of *The Four Zoas*, and *Jerusalem* as other people being called to offer their own personal account. This leads to the position which Blackstone claims as the reason for the poem having been left in incomplete form - in order that it be not possible to give a final interpretation of the poem, thus leaving it in a fluid state.

It is because Blake "traced with absolute fidelity, the inner life as he saw it"⁷ that Blackstone can support his conclusion, for others will see the same Four

Great Ones in themselves, and apply them to themselves as they saw Blake did in *Milton*, after they have read the instructions in *Jerusalem*. Therefore, Blackstone suggests that the best approach to Blake is to isolate the sayings from the prophetic books and add them to the Proverbs of Hell, marking the interplay between the two in order to understand them. But this is problematic for two reasons. First, Blake was quite capable of writing aphorisms - as we can see in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and thus the question is begged as to why he wrote the three great poems at all. Secondly, and more importantly, the approach to Blake which makes such abstractions from his poems, produces in the end a total, atemporal reading of Blake which seems to run counter to the epistemology we have seen to be developing in Blake's work.

The answer to the question as to why Blake wrote poems rather than aphorisms seems to lie in Blackstone's own conclusions, or rather in the fact that he can draw any conclusions at all. For if Blake's poetry means anything over and above the aphorisms into which it can be reduced, it is that the ideas which may perhaps be aphorized are transformational of the reader, and thus cannot be successfully isolated from the poetic text that presents them. This fits in with the idea we saw in the previous chapter that Blake was against abstracting rules to follow. But if this presentation of transformational aphorisms to be added to the *Proverbs of Hell* is the project of *The Four Zoas*, it still has the status of an abstract rule to follow, even if it is said to have no statable form, and therefore suffers from the same problems as Derrida's *différance* which though claimed not to be a sign, can still be defined just as any other sign by anyone who has read any of Derrida's work.

Taking it for granted that Blake does have a unique epistemology, his work is necessarily transformational as it has no forebears upon which to draw, and this would account for Blackstone's reading of *The Four Zoas* as a fluid text.

personally reinterpreted. But the transformational nature of Blake's epistemology would also suggest that Blake was himself transformed by it. Thus Blake cannot trace with absolute fidelity the inner life as he saw it without stabilizing his view of inner life for his readers to abstract from the poem and follow, and thus, the text of *The Four Zoas* becomes one which not only must be reinterpreted over and over again by its readers, but one which must be rewritten again and again by its author, in order that it may do what it describes. This would account for the mechanistic reasons for Blake's abandonment of *The Four Zoas*, but not the substantial ones.

This brief study suggests that both backward and forward looking readings of Blake's poem are inadequate in themselves as they lead to the same irreducible tension. The tension that exists between the poem saying something definite and its disruption of what is said in the process of saying. However, it is in the creative use of this tension, we would suggest, wherein lies the greatness and uniqueness of Blake's epistemology of the Contrary. And it is this same tension which we also find as a negative element in the two books of criticism which are devoted solely to *The Four Zoas*.

It is not surprising to find that Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson's book: *Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream*⁸, concentrates on maintaining the consensus of Blake interpretation leading from Yeats and Murry to Frye and beyond; while Donald Ault's book: *Narrative Unbound: Re-Visioning Blake's The Four Zoas*⁹, concentrates on the poem's disruptions and disjunctions. As we have seen above, in such one-sided approaches what becomes important is the way in which each accounts for the problems which the other reifies as the whole issue at stake in the poem.

Wilkie and Johnson's book begins by tackling the problem of dual authorship, upon which the most interesting of their methods of study of the poem is based. The writing process they describe is of one writing and the other criticizing, with the text being passed back and forth until they reached the finally accepted draft which was the one both liked best. This method of passing back and forward until consensus is reached from personal viewpoint is taken up as an analogical method of study. Thus, although fourth on the list of analysis techniques underneath Allegory, Intricate Structure and Story, "Myth which acts upon us its readers"¹⁰ in fact becomes the most important tool for the consensual understanding of *The Four Zoas* which Wilkie and Johnson propound, for it is the method by which they believe that consensus is reached.

This "myth which acts upon us, its readers" is defined as:

a strangely potent kind of myth that, like dreams, can penetrate the
hiding places of our weakness and our power in ways that sometimes
resist the most rigorous analysis¹¹

Thus we can see immediately that although Wilkie and Johnson claim to be trying to reach a consensus, they are aware of the individual element which betrays absolute shared understanding. For this reason, as in Blackstone's approach, they give great emphasis to analogies from personal experience - for example, that grasping the whole meaning of the poem is like grasping a bowling ball with no finger holes. The problem with this method is that it only has meaning for those of us who have been ten pin bowling. There is therefore, the need for yet another rider to this method:

the adducing of analogies from personal and familiar experience ... are
not intended as glosses on the objective meaning of the passages to

which they are attached, but rather as stimuli that implicitly invite readers to supply other analogies that may be more helpful to them to bring the poem alive for them.¹²

This would seem to be an indelible separation between the process of understanding and objective meaning, but Wilkie and Johnson go beyond this point. They allow for the disruption which this method imposes upon their work to stand alongside objective meaning in order that they can "treat the poem more comprehensively"¹³, because it can appeal to everybody.

Strangely, this falls into Eliot's Bradleyan approach to Immediate Experience, where the meaning of what is written moves from the personal to the objective by the consensus between differing analogies. Strange, because Eliot criticized Blake for writing in too complex a way in these later poems for such a method to be applicable. Eliot's own criterion of classical education as the key to consensus appears to be the only factor which differs between his and Wilkie and Johnson's approach, but this is because education has been separated from analogy in the form of the other analytical tools which provide just such an induction.

Despite this obvious problem, Wilkie and Johnson give further support to their claim of the validity of an analogical approach to the understanding of Blake. At the end of the introduction, they write:

We continue to believe that *The Four Zoas* can communicate much of its meaning clearly, though inwardly, before its readers are confident of their own understanding of the poem.¹⁴

Here, Wilkie and Johnson short-circuit Eliot's call for consensus through education, and although it might be no more than an exhortation to students

faced with a very complex poem to persevere with what they feel the text might be saying to them, it has a completely different metaphysical status from the rest of their approach.

For as Wilkie and Johnson write:

Surely Blake was trying something more than ordinary discursive communications or other kinds of mythic or allegorical narrative. The most impressive proof of this fact, if proof is needed, is that the story of the poem, including the development of the Zoas and Emanations as characters and of their relations to one another, *is often one of the last things readers come to discern clearly*. This reverses the normal psychological process of understanding narrative, a process in which far-reaching or universal implications occur to us only after we have literally understood what is happening.¹⁵

But before beginning their own reading of the text, Wilkie and Johnson do precisely what they suggest is not necessary, in printing a list of the main protagonists and their designations as agreed by most Blake scholars up to date. This calling upon scholarly consensus gives a deductive quality to what was supposed to be "inwardly communicated" induction from Blake's mythology, and is used to set up the Allegorical reading of the text as one of fall and redemption. Thus, the Structure and Story follow, drawn from the same source. In this way, the whole edifice of *The Four Zoas* can be seen to support the inductions of the generations of scholars in a recursive justification, and the "inward communication" of meaning is lost in the apparent dawning of concrete certainty.

This is justified in a series of over briefly outlined steps: Wilkie and Johnson suggest that what the poem means is how the poem works, that the poem has no context, that the mythology is offered bluntly as a *fait accompli*, and that the non-mimetic form offers either a return to pre-Homeric primitivism or an

advance in literary form. All this leads them to the conclusion that the poem may be compared to a "dream narrative", and herein lies their hidden agenda. What seemed to be a revolutionary idea of "inward communication", where universal application precedes the apprehension of the story, is reduced to a Freudian unconscious with the appeal to scientificity which this method brings with it. The wildness and uncontrollability of "inward communication" is captured beneath the net of scientific respectability, and Blake becomes another Christian psychologist.

But if "inward communication" first trod its way through the "contextless space" of Blake's non-mimetic universe, this seems to suggest that there is some sort of connection between subjectivity and objectivity, for, as Wilkie and Johnson found from the experience of teaching the poem:

Readers encountering the poem for the first time frequently experience utter bewilderment yet they risk bold surmise in considering the meaning of a specific episode, they often find themselves in agreement with other readers, including experts on Blake.¹⁶

However, we need go no further along this track for the moment as the contextless and non-mimetic universe of the text is not encountered by contextless and non-mimetic readers, who must now be seen to be importing the consensus of scholars to the text in something less than a miracle.

At this point, we will leave Wilkie and Johnson's approach to *The Four Zoas*, with the general comment that although they attempted to read the poem as consensually a Christian Epic, they are left with the problem that, by their method, stripped of its appeal to previous scholars, a reader might import anything to the text, especially if, as Eliot suggested of Blake, s/he lacked education to underpin it.

In the Foreword to Donald Ault's book, George Quasha suggests that the reader of *The Four Zoas* "is not encouraged to find unity and consistency, but multiplicity and difference"¹⁷. Furthermore, he uses "Where shall we stand to view the infinite & unbounded" (Night IX p 122 24) as his epigram. Thus the book and poem are announced as PostStructuralist works, in which Blake "opened a path and created a vehicle to travel it", where "to embrace truth is ... to escape induction into the trance of consensus."

Without reading further, we know that this reading of Blake's text will be totally at odds with Wilkie and Johnson's in a way similar to the difference between Larrissy's reading of Blake and Raine's, and Erdman and Bloom's readings of Blake and Frye's. But as we saw in Wilkie and Johnson's reading - that there was a problem with the incorporation of subjectivity into consensus - in this reading, in Quasha's introduction, there is already a problem of the incorporation of consensus into subjectivity. For although Quasha suggests that the unity of consensus is "a fictive option of the virtual narrative in which the reader is inevitably co-creative", the context of his epigram suggests more chains in Blake's text than Quasha would like.

- Urizen said: I have Erred & my Error remains with me
 What Chain encompasses in what Lock is the river of light confin'd
 That issues forth in the morning by measure & the evening by
 carefulness
 Where shall we take our stand to view the Infinite & unbound
 Or where are the human feet for Lo our eyes are in the heavens
 He ceased for rivm link from link the bursting Universe explodes

For although the rallying cry of the Post Structuralists - that there is no place outside from which to see everything - is put into the mouth of Urizen at the

moment when he realises that there can be no such place, the realisation comes in the same speech as two puns on the Great Chain of Being and the name of the philosopher Locke. If these are what is to be escaped to avoid the trance of consensus, the same structure of Fall - into the error of the scientific deist philosophers - and Redemption - in the bursting Universe of difference - is evoked as in the Christian consensual reading of Wilkie and Johnson.

Donald Ault is much more subtle in his approach to *The Four Zoas* but no more successful in avoiding the fall back into a consensus that the poem is about Fall and Redemption, in the rejection of something that was wrong, and replacing it with something correct. His *Preliminary Remarks*¹⁸ however do make some interesting suggestions in the light of Wilkie and Johnson's reading of the poem, for it is his stated project to remove readers' preconceptions in order to reach his conclusion 'that is not intended to compete with the existing body of Blake scholarship but rather to be fundamentally incommensurable with it.'¹⁹

This removal of preconceptions is made with the intention of showing that *Narrative Unbound* is not offering a counter paradigm, and thus its incommensurability with traditional metaphysics cannot be reduced to another movement of tradition - as we saw was the process of tradition above in Chapter 3. But: *

It is nevertheless true that in this study [Narrative Unbound], the "fall" is considered provisionally, as a narrative pretext for enacting a "fall" in the reader.²⁰

This seems to suggest that Ault's whole project takes a similar line to the "inward communication" which Wilkie and Johnson believed to motivate understanding of the poem. For, like Wilkie and Johnson, Ault stresses 'reader events'²¹ as the

method of the poem's transmission. The difference in their approaches however, is that where Wilkie and Johnson find consensus between the thoughts of the readers, in Ault's study:

memories are treated as ways of fictionalising the present which contribute to the myth of the "fall".²²

It is in this way that Ault can read Night IX:

subversively in order to resist the pull of its apocalyptic teleology by focusing on the presence of structural interferences that undermine the closure of the narrative.²³

In other words, Ault treats memory as disjunctive with present experience, while Wilkie and Johnson treat it as conjunctive. But both take memory for granted as being of the Augustinian type which is a build up of things past which acts upon the present situation:

as I learned words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences. I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified: and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs. I used them to express my own desires.²⁴

The incommensurability between the readings therefore lies in the fact that Wilkie and Johnson propound an Adamic theory of meaning, where the synthesis of the consensus of all memories will lead to one proper overlaying of words onto things; and Ault propounds an evolutionary theory of meaning, where words are seen to change, and their meaning is only to be apprehended in the context of utterance - the "reader event". Thus, Wilkie and Johnson's conjunction of memory

and present event would expect a consensus of memory: while Ault's disjunction of memory and present event, would always produce variants to the context by introducing previous meanings which were not relevant.

But in expounding this incommensurability, Ault has had to isolate *The Four Zoas* from the rest of Blake's poetry and poetics, and pronounce the poem to be complete, assuming:

that the process of interference by means of discrepant details is an irreducible reality of *The Four Zoas* narrative and demonstrates how a close analysis of the poem from this particularising vantage calls attention to details which in turn provide access to significant but previously unarticulated structures in the text.²⁵

And in this move lies Ault's upholding of the consensus that the poem concerns the Fall and Resurrection pattern. For his new structures come to usurp the stable history of scholarly deductions which has drawn the set of - to Ault - erroneous apocalyptic conclusions by being *incommensurable* with them. This is the typical movement of the PostStructuralists since *De La Grammatologie*²⁶: to turn the opposition of the dominant metaphysics on its head. Thus Ault can claim that the difference, between this method and Fall/Resurrection is that once the opposition of metaphysics is upturned, the freedom to produce more and more different structures of meaning is taken to pronounce the uncloseability of metaphysics rather than its asymptotic approach.

But nevertheless, this does not move from the basic idea that *The Four Zoas* is a text which demands a transformation of its reader by replacing that which was wrong with something new. In this way, although Ault claims that:

It is inevitable ... that even critics who focus on the subversive tendencies of Blake's poetry sometimes uncritically retain key

assumptions of the traditional paradigm as they reformulate Blake's texts in relation to the new terminologies and methodological strategies.²⁷

he is, in his own critical strategy, maintaining the traditional structure of Redemption, albeit Redemption from the possible closure of metaphysics, however subversive his treatment of the text might be.

If we now look at the conclusions of both of these readings of *The Four Zoas* together, we can see that while Wilkie and Johnson were anxious lest any analogical readings they brought into their text acted "as glosses on the objective meaning of" the poem, in order that they did not enforce what they thought was an inevitable "inward communication": Ault was worried that:

Since my aim in *Narrative Unbound* is to open up possibilities of reading *The Four Zoas*, I constantly run the risk of seeming to close off interpretative possibilities in the process of the linear unfolding of the argument.²⁸

Both of these provisos hinge on the role of memory vis a vis the present event (of reading *The Four Zoas*) held by the differing readers discussed above, but as we saw, both partake of the same Augustinian understanding of memory which Blake did not hold. In *Milton*, he writes:

We do not want Greek or Roman models ... The Daughters of Memory shall become the Daughters of Inspiration.²⁹

This, as Jack Lindsay suggests³⁰, rejects the Greek myth of Mnemosyne as mother of the Muses. For if memory and inspiration (breathing in, or the infusion

into the mind which is perception) are placed on the same level of generation, the one comes with the other, and memory does not act as womb for inspiration. This radically alters the Augustinian temporality of memory and suggests that Blake must have a theory of time involved in his epistemology of the connection between the phenomenal and the real which does not - as we had suggested at the end of Chapter 4 - completely dispense with memory.

But this is to look forward to *Milton* to see the result of the epistemological changes which we must first investigate appearing in the alterations to the poem *Vala or The Four Zoas*. The changes which account for both the poem's instability when read, and possibly the poem's eventual abandonment by its author.

Notes:

- 1 - Blake, Annotations to Bacon page xii. K 397.
- 2 - H.M.Margoliouth, *Vala - Blake's Numbered Text* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956)
- 3 - Ibid. p.xxvi.
- 4 - Ibid.
- 5 - B Blackstone, *English Blake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1948).
- 6 - Ibid. p.67.
- 7 - Ibid. p.68.
- 8 - Brian Wilkie & Mary Lynn Johnson, *Blake's Four Zoas: The Design of a Dream* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard UP, 1978). [Cited as W&J].
- 9 - Donald Ault, *Narrative Unbound* (Barrytown: Station Hill, 1987). [Cited as NUB].
- 10 - W&J, Introduction.
- 11 - Ibid.
- 12 - Ibid.
- 13 - Ibid.
- 14 - Ibid.
- 15 - Ibid. p.2 (My italics).
- 16 - Ibid. p.2/3.
- 17 - NUB, unpaginated.
- 18 - Ibid.
- 19 - Ibid.
- 20 - Ibid. p.xvii.
- 21 - Ibid. unpaginated.
- 22 - Ibid. p.xvii.
- 23 - Ibid.

- 24 - St. Augustine, *Confessions* trans. by R.S.Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), bk.1, para 8.
- 25 - Ibid. unpaginated
- 26 - Jacques Derrida, *De La Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967). [q.v. p.141].
- 27 - NUB, p.xviii.
- 28 - Ibid. p.xxiii.
- 29 - Milton Plate 1 K480/E95
- 30 - Jack Lindsay, *William Blake: His Life and Work* (London: Constable,1978), p.177.

Chapter 6 - The Development of *Vala*.

From the readings in the last chapter, we saw that in order to produce a consensual reading of *The Four Zoas*, Wilkie and Johnson must necessarily read the poem from a totalizing transcription of the type of Erdman or Keynes. The text in Ostriker's edition, with its italicised erasures, or of Erdman and Magno's facsimile, with its photographs of each page, would both tend towards variance. In this way, consensus is produced out of a stabilization of the time of the poem into a synchronous web of interconnecting and interrelating parts at the expense of the variable space of the poem.

In order to produce a dissensual reading of *The Four Zoas*, Donald Ault has allowed the destabilization of the variable space of the poem which allows the variants of each page to act in as many different ways as possible. But this is done at the expense of the logic of time, for it is obvious even from a cursory look at each page where new lines have been added to earlier work.

We may then draw an analogy between each of these positions and the two elements of metaphysics between which T S Eliot's poetry vacillates, and by which he criticized Blake for holding a closed view of Immediate Experience.¹ At that point, we could go no further than showing that by adhering to the logicity of the priority of Immediate Experience, Blake automatically absorbed everything which could be perceived into the finitude of the perceiver: he had contained the infinite in the finite. We could go no further, because the vastness of the project this closed metaphysics set up - that one must merely criticize the systematic impositions which have modified one's world view to reach automatically the sort of harmony Eliot constantly defers - is belied by the brevity of its stating. As stated above, Blake might have been able to go confidently forward in his poetry where every moment of it was revelatory. But the certainty of knowledge

underlying this project may be questioned as to the method of differentiating between what is Immediate Experience and what arcana were imposed by the "ancient Poets" who began priesthood².

Because of this, Blake's poetry cannot be seen as a simple revealing of truth in crystal clear verse, but - if his technique is consistent with his theory - must include a method of stripping away the layers of the systems of the Scientists and Priests which have clouded such clarity. Following from this, the temporal aspect of Blake's poetry suggested in the last chapter should be seen to lie in the removing of the accretions of systematic meaning from the ever new, and immediately experienced meaning (which Eliot claimed Blake had - although solipsistically), and then moving to counter the claim of solipsism with an appeal to the non generative view of memory. For if memory comes on the same level of generation as inspiration and perception, rather than acting as their womb, then the phenomenal and the real are not separated for the single perceiver or for the many.

And this is the series of problems we can see Blake addressing if we read *Vala* or *The Four Zoas* as a poem to which additions and corrections have been made, and left visible on the surface of the palimpsest. For rather than a poem with a fixed end point which the reader can guess at, or a fluid text which will allow any reading credence, the poem with added lines and pages suggests the method of its own reading page by page, looking at the effect that the additions and corrections have on the developing and changing work. This will suggest that building up a picture of whatever the whole meaning might be from the minute particulars of its temporal and spatial construction will not allow for either a totalizing reading or a freeplay of fluid possibilities, but rather a poem which can stand being read in many different ways and at many different levels by many different readers.

Such a method cannot be said to lead to or from absolute answers about the variety of times at which the additions and corrections were made, or as to whether Nights VII and VIII postdate the greater part of the poem, but it does flow logically from looking at each page as a layering of new text upon old, with the consequent transfiguration of old text by the new insertions. For this reason, and solely for the purpose of a clearer exposition, we would suggest that a reading following three of the many stable moments of the poem indicated by Margoliouth³ will serve as the best method of indicating the way in which these arbitrary levels vary from one another in the development of a text which led from the revolutionary prophecies of the Lambeth cycle to the personal and global revelations of *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.

These stable moments cannot, of course, be read by themselves as complete works as there are too many erasures from each to allow for an understanding of each text as a whole. Nevertheless much can be inferred from the physical layering of writing on each page. For this reason, we shall not attempt to duplicate the work of Margoliouth in isolating other versions of *Vala*, or Erdman in trying to produce the best fit of the pieces of *The Four Zoas* into one coherent whole, if only because of the problems of dating additions⁴, but instead, we shall read each of the three arbitrarily chosen stable moments together with whatever context the fragments of possible wholes suggest. In this way we shall mimic, although only in a general and schematic way, the stability and flexibility of language inherent in Blake's metaphysics of the Contrary.

The first stable moment of the poem suggested by Margoliouth, he calls Text A,⁵ and was written on pages 3 to 18 of *The Four Zoas*. This surmise follows the fact that this fragment was copied out on seven sheets in Blake's best handwriting, and numbered 1 to 14 in the top right hand corner of the carefully

written text. It has been completely erased from *The Four Zoas* pages 3 to 6, partially erased from *The Four Zoas* pages 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 18, and *The Four Zoas* pages 15 and 16 have been inserted as new material, as well as pages 19-22 at the end to make up the complete Night I.

Margoliouth suggests that this Text A might have been the whole poem *Vala* when originally conceived, and we might make further bold surmise that it could possibly have been one form of *The Second Book of Urizen* which was planned but never executed.⁶ The plot of what remains of Text A concerns the birth of Los and Enitharmon as ingrate children of Enion and a nameless scaly serpent (probably Tharmas⁷), and the flight of *Vala* from the heart to the brain of the Eternal Man, while Urizen sleeps and Luvah seizes the Chariot of Day. For these reasons, the 'I' narrator of the song Enitharmon sings enters the dream state of 'the visions of *Vala*'⁸, and hears a veiled figure weeping. Los is angry and counters Enitharmon's song with another story of some erased person trying to comfort *Vala* for the loss of Luvah. He says that Luvah is not lost, but is invisible, and that they all live "in the Brain of Man"⁹. For some erased reason, Urizen thunders indignantly and brings forth a host of ten thousand to a banquet where the food causes the revellers to enter into the "Void Where Enion craves"¹⁰, and calls more and more revellers to eat. All sing a great song, but excluded from the joy Enion laments, seeing Winter following hard upon this great feast.

If we regard this short poem as part of the Lambeth series, its context suggests that it comes as a predecessor to *Europe*, in which Enitharmon appears being herself a mother. As such Text A forms the preface to the wars of Edom which precede the Last Judgement that comes as the prediction at the end of *Europe*.¹¹ Thus Los prophesies "the strife of blood", which Erdman suggests is the war between England and France of 1793¹² as the movement of the Revolution from America to France (*Europe* 14:37 - 15:2) and finally to England. In

this way the Revelation of the Last Judgement is predicted as a result of a civil war which would act as the force which will sweep away the errors of official Christianity¹³ that are akin to the layers of the systems of the priesthood we saw above. Thus Text A still falls as part of Blake's attempt to depict the fallen world and the possibility of heaven on earth brought about by political means.

But if this is so, the whole cycle of Lambeth prophecies shows a development towards some form of Platonism in a revision of *Europe* in 1800¹⁴, for it is the fairy of the new preface to this poem who gives Blake the answer to the question of materialism, much as the philosopher gaining knowledge of Ideas can use that knowledge to break the chains which bind him in Plato's cave.

In the second arbitrary state, called *Vala* by Margoliouth and published by him as *Blake's Numbered Text*, we can see more clearly Blake's change from faith in political action to a more thorough going Neoplatonism where earthly strife is concluded in the greater certainty of the futural spiritual harmony of 'the Reign of Sweet Science'¹⁵. The date of this poem - 1797¹⁶ - places it as two years later than the rest of the Lambeth prophecies, and at least eighteen months before Blake went to Felpham. The problem with Blake's own dating of his poems is that they seem to reflect some symbolic time rather than the time of actual composition¹⁷, but perhaps this can be used to give information as to their place in history as Blake saw them. In this case, 1797 suggests that Blake would have known that the September massacres in the Reign of Terror of Robespierre were followed by the weak and corrupt Directory, all of which would have given him further reason for giving up the idea that Revolution, 'the strife of blood', could lead to a better life on earth. The suggestion that the poem contains modifications to Text A made around the time of the addition of the preface to *Europe* also backs up the idea of Blake's developing Neoplatonism.

In the modified story of Text A, the birth of Los and Enitharmon is preceded by an account of why Urthona fell from Eden and out of Unity to become the prophet Los. This story is sung by the Daughters of Beulah: the land married to the Lord in Isaiah. Damon suggests that Beulah is the realm of the subconscious and the source of poetic inspiration, but the Biblical context suggests otherwise:

Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more
be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah for the Lord
delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be Married¹⁸

This song of the Lord entering the land suggests spirit entering the earth which thereby becomes Beulah or Married, and is similar to the Neoplatonic cycle of the purification of spirit by matter. Thus this story of Los may be seen as a development of Kathleen Raine's reading of *The Book of Thel*. For, where Thel as spirit runs away from matter as almost a burlesque of a spirit refusing to enter the Porphyryne cycle, Los is put into a position where his descent is necessary as a result of the Parent Power of Tharmas.

This power is seen in a shift in the propagation of emanations, for where Urthona "his Emanations propagated Like Sons and Daughters"¹⁹, those of Tharmas are "Lost! Lost! Lost!"²⁰. This loss makes Tharmas and Enion "A Victim to the Living"²¹ and turns Liberty into the "stern demands of Right & Duty"²². That they might be victim to the living evokes the Porphyryne notion that earthly life is the grave of the spirit, and the supplanting of liberty by right and duty suggests a mechanism of purification which will be undergone by Tharmas and Los. Purification of the spirit is further suggested in the weaving of the Spectre of

Tharmas while Enion laments, and the "dismal pain"²³ in which she draws out the threads of her woof, which is called "a deed of Love"²⁴.

The weaving may also be seen to be allied to Newton's scientific project in the weaving of atmospheres discussed in Hilton²⁵ (although taken by him as being the outcome of the whole of *The Four Zoas*). Hilton's argument is not specifically Neoplatonic, although it can be reinterpreted in such terms when considered alongside Newton's claim that:

The changing of Bodies into Light & Light into Bodies, is conformable to the Course of Nature, which seems to delight in transformations.²⁶

and:

Perhaps the whole frame of nature may be nothing but various contextures of some certain aethereal spirits, or vapours, condensed as it were by precipitation.²⁷

Hilton's argument is based on the use of the word "Science" to describe the Newtonian "suspension of belief and emphasis of doubt in the interests of the profitability and utility of experimental results". This is the materialism of Newton, and therefore fits into an idea of matter into which spirits such as Thel or Los fall to be purified by, or gain profit from, their immersion. And this concept of "Science" is opposed to the "Sweet Science" of Night IX which is belief. Hilton writes:

The distinction, ultimately, has to do with the place of man in the scientific endeavour: for Newton, "Man exists in order to know and applaud" the order of the God of Nature in his unchanging laws, whereas for Blake the imagination is to realize itself as the Being that

instituted Nature and continually bodies forth new creations. The use of the term "Science" for both endeavours shows that the two will eventually be one.²⁸

In other words, the Imagination is seen as the instigator of the hypotheses of the scientific method of doubt, or as the process behind the project towards the gaining of the unchanging laws. And the process of this project is one of purification. Along with this, the addition of Newton to the Neoplatonic cycle may be seen as an assignment of purpose to material existence through an explanation of how things are, for it is the nature of spirit to condense like a vapour to become matter. Thus, the loss of Tharmas' emanations is accounted for in the nature of spirit.

To give further support to Hilton's suggestion that Blake's poem is a (Neoplatonic) redemption for Newtonian science we may take a brief glimpse into Newton's project in the *Principia Mathematica*. In the Introduction he writes that:

The ancients considered mechanics in a twofold respect; as rational, which proceeds accurately by demonstration, and practical. ... But as artificers do not work with perfect accuracy it comes to pass that mechanics is so distinguished from geometry that what is perfectly accurate is called geometrical; what is less so is called mechanical. However, the errors are not in the art but in the artificers. He that works with less accuracy is an imperfect mechanic; and if any could work with perfect accuracy, he would be the most perfect mechanic.²⁹

In the light of the Neoplatonic cycle, this perfection of the artificers may thus be seen to be able to be approached by a series of purifications of spirit in matter instigated by the power of the imagination which runs throughout Newton's method as the setting up of hypothesis in the scientific method.

The background for this alliance of Newtonian science and Neoplatonism in Blake may be found in the preface to Thomas Taylor's *Complete Works of Plato* where Plato's philosophy as read by Proclus is seen as:

the greatest good in which man can participate for it purifies us from the defilements of the passions and assimilates us to Divinity. It confers on us the proper felicity of our nature. Hence it is easy to collect its preeminence to all other philosophies, to show that where they oppose it they are erroneous: that so far they contain anything *scientific* they are allied to it, and that at best they are but rivulets derived from the vast ocean of truth.³⁰ [My italics]

Thus, where Newton relegated the Godhead to a position of first mover, and the scientist to being imperfect mechanic, the action of the greatest good - Platonic philosophy - upon man is to assimilate him to the divinity which is the felicity of his proper nature: to be the perfect mechanic.

At about the same time³¹, Blake wrote a poem in his notebook which exemplifies the Redemption of Newton using the method of combining belief or "Sweet Science" with science against simple Reason in the removal of the dream state which could be the "visions of Vala"

You dont believe I wont attempt to make ye
You are asleep I wont attempt to wake ye
Sleep on Sleep on while in your pleasant dream
Of Reason you may drink of Lifes clear streams
Reason and Newton they are quite two things
For so the swallow & the Sparrow sings
Reason says Miracle Newton says Doubt
Aye thats the way to make all Nature out
Doubt Doubt & dont believe without experiment
That is the very thing that Jesus meant

When he said Only Believe Believe & try
Try Try & and never mind the reason why³²

Here, Reason may be seen to be the arcana imposed by the "Ancient Poets", for in its sleep lies the belief that life is seen clearly. And it is this idea which seems to be that dramatized in Text A where "Urizen sleeps in the porch/ Luvah and Vala woke & flew up from the Human Heart/ Into the Brain", but we can now see it recontextualized in *Vala* - and taking the form of the Notebook poem - by the Neoplatonic additions, where the Doubt of Newtonian scientific method is allied to the belief of Jesus.

Given this Neoplatonic reading of the rewritten first five pages of Text A, the weaving of the Spectre of Tharmas and its coupling with Enion to give birth to Los and Enitharmon, can be seen to be the initiation of a series of states of spiritual purification in which prophecy is set up as the underlying cycle which acts as both a description of the cycle and a teleology. That it will be a series of states may be seen clearly in an addition to Page 8 (4V of *Vala*):

The first state weeping they began & helpless as a wave
Beaten along its sightless way growing enormous in its motion to
its utmost goal.

After which, Enion's function is now fulfilled and she decays:

—her hair became like snow on mountains
Weaker and weaker weeping woeful, wearier and wearier
Faded & her bright Eyes decayd melted with pity & love

in another addition to Page 8 (4V of *Vala*).

This sets off the emendations to Pages 9, 10 & 11 (5R, 5V & 6R of *Vala*).

and the rewriting of the stories told by Enitharmon and Los of Vala in a light which shows Blake's change from Revolutionary politics to Neoplatonic Redemption. It is this interchange between Los and Enitharmon to which the minutest changes have been made which serves to show this most clearly. What we have of Text A reads.

Thy name is Enitharmon, said the bright prophetic boy

One line erased

But Enitharmon answerd with a dropping tear & (?)

(?) as a dewy morning when the crimson light appears

To make us happy how they weary their immortal powers

While we draw in their sweet delights (?)

(?) for if we grateful prove

They will withhold sweet love, whose food is thorns & bitter roots

Hear (?) of Death! It is a (?) of Vala!

The Eternal Man takes his repose Urizen sleeps in the porch

Luvah and Vala wake & fly up from the Human Heart

Into the Brain: from thence upon the pillow Vala slumberd

And Luvah seiz'd the Horses of light & rose into the Chariot of Day

(?) in the visions of Vala (?)

(?) heard his word among the branches, & among sweet flowers

* Why is the Light of (?) darken'd in (?) dewy morn

Why is the silence of (?)

Uttering this darkness in my halls, in the pillars of my Holy-ones

Why dost thou weep as Vala? & wet thy veil with dewy tears.

In slumbers of my night-repose, infusing a false morning?

I heard the sounding sea, I heard the voice weaker and weaker,

The voice came and went like a dream, I awoke in my sweet bias

Los answer'd, darkening with foul indignation hid in smiles

One line erased

Seeking to comfort Vala, (?) she will not be comforted

She rises from his throne and seeks the shadows of her garden

Weeping for Luvah (?)
 Sickening lies the Eternal Man his head sick his heart faint
 I see, invisible descend into the Garden of Vala
 Luvah walking on the winds ?
One line erased
 (?) In the Brain of Man we live, & In his circling Nerves
 (?) this bright world of all our joy is in the Human Brain
 (?) Urizen & all his host hang up their immortal lamps
 (?) cold expanse where watry Tharmas mourns

Of this section, the opening lines of the second part of Enitharmon's song are the most important, for in the rewritten form they are partially self referral and partially refer to Los, whereas a careful study of the handwritten page suggests that they must almost certainly have originally referred entirely to Los. The words written in best copperplate are:

Why is the light of ? darken'd in [ink blot] dewy morn
 Why is the silence of ?

In the first space, the name Enitharmon written over an erasure is split, 'Enith' being written on the line, and 'armon' written above it. This suggests that the name³³ originally written in this space was short, and measurement of the space and Blake's writing of the names of his characters in best copperplate script shows that the space will only fit three letters, and must therefore have been the name Los.

The ink blotted out word is replaced by Margoliouth, Ostriker and Keynes as 'her', referring back to Enitharmon, and presumably thought to have been erased for the sake of rhythm. This reason for erasure however, would fit more easily into the idea that the name originally written was Los, where the word inked over was 'his'. Here again, careful inspection of the blot reveals that although

undoubtedly Blake did write the word "her", there is a vestige of a point on the upper far right corner which is consonant with the writing of an "s" beneath the "r" in Blake's best copperplate hand. The dot of the "i" of the word "his" may also be discerned adjoined to the loop of the "g" of the word "among" on the line above.

On the next line, Margoliouth suggests that only the words over which "Enitharmon a Cloud" were rewritten have been erased, but the quality of writing of the words "& her" is not the same as the rest of Blake's best copperplate. The ampersand is truncated and deformed, and the loop of the "h" unformed, the upstroke being to the left of the downstroke. We might also be so bold as to suggest that the malformed "d" at the end of the word "whirlwind" gives evidence that the second half of that line was written at the same time as the replacement of the name Los by Enitharmon, when Blake was no longer trying to save the look of the manuscript.

If this is the case, Enitharmon's story of Vala and Luvah is followed by a taunt of Los alone, saying that he is no longer "bright" in his "dewy morn", as he has become silent and like Vala, weeping in a weaker and weaker voice beneath a veil.

This would account more strongly for Los's indignation (Page 11 line 4, 6R line 3), and sets up his reply as a counter story to that which Enitharmon has just told. In this retelling of the same events, Vala is being comforted by some male whose name is erased - "she rises from *his* throne". The male cannot be Luvah, for the throne is that of the comforter of her sorrow at the *loss* of Luvah, and is therefore probably Urizen. Thus, Vala is said to be mourning the loss of Luvah, and refuses the comforts of Urizen, while Luvah is nevertheless there in her garden although invisible to her.

In terms of the Revolutionary politics of the Lambeth cycle, Enitharmon taunts Los that he, the prophet of political change has become hidden beneath

Urizen's veil of appearance which was woven around the Void in *The Book of Urizen*³⁴, and is sounding fainter and fainter. He is angered and replies that even though appearance puts trust in the emptiness of reason, that which appears to be is not the case, for passion is still there in the garden of appearances although invisible, and may yet bring forth the strength for the "strife of blood", in the rejuvenation of the Eternal Man.

The same interchange in *Vala* is radically altered. Enitharmon's story of the flight of *Vala* to the brain is taken as reason for her own fall into darkness, and Los's weeping beneath a veil is inclusive of him in the same fallen state. Thus his answer in the rewritten lines on Page 11 (6R lines4/6):

I die not Enitharmon tho thou singst a song of Death
Nor shall thou me torment For I behold the Fallen Man
Seeking to comfort *Vala* . . .

sets himself apart from fallenness in the program of prophecy as the underlying cycle of "The Death and Judgement of the Eternal Man" which was the subtitle of *Vala*.

Los proclaims that although Enitharmon has sung of the flight of *Vala* causing the death of everything "in the bloody beams of [Enitharmon's] false morning"³⁵, which is the death of the Eternal Man in which was the bright world of the Immortals, neither the Eternal Man nor the prophet himself are dead. For, although Enitharmon "neer shall leave this cold expanse where watry Tharmas mourns"³⁵, Los can see that it is merely a temporary fallen state of the man to succumb to the deceptions of *Vala*. Thus he sees - prophesies - that the entrance of Luvah invisible into *Vala*'s garden will end this infatuation in "the shower of blood"³⁵ of Luvah's "invisible knife"³⁵. Here the murder of *Vala* and the vision of

'futurity'³⁵ are the action and substance of prophecy which in itself is the tearing down of a veil which hides, to reveal the truth in redemption after a time of purification (between Los's telling of his story and the outcome of the prophecy). Thus, as we suggested above, prophecy acts as both a description of the cycle and its teleology. Thus, as the prophet, Los acts as the spirit remaining alive in the purifying process of its insertion into matter.

From the discussion of the Notebook poem above, we saw that this Neoplatonic cycle which partakes of Newtonian science was posed against simple reason whose dreams are of clarity. Therefore, it is no surprise that the additions to Text A on Page 12 (6V) concern the mutual sizing up of Los who is the product of these two elements, and Urizen, as sleeping reason. After this non-engagement, it is by force of numbers of followers that Urizen is the victor and may set out the Wedding feast of Los and Enitharmon as his servants³⁶. There is too much erased from Page 12 (6V) to make any guesses as to what was the earlier intention, but after Los's condemnation of Enitharmon to Tharmas' watry expanse in Page 11 (6R), the reason for the uneasiness in their forced marriage is clearly because of the notion of spiritual hatred of matter in the Neoplatonic cycle, where Los represents spirit and Enitharmon matter.

The rewritten nuptial song backs up the ideas of the Notebook poem as it dramatizes the opposition between Los and Urizen, being sung in praise of Urizen's reason over Los's prophecy:

Fattend on Human blood & drunk with wine of life is better far
Than all these labours of the harvest & the vintage.³⁷

The two methods of understanding the world are set up in opposition here. Urizen's is to construct a mental picture of the world, 'a Tent, with strong curtains

around ... the Void³⁸, which is the abstracting power of reason. Los's is to labour on the earth waiting for the outcome of prophecy, the harvest and vintage, which is the process and outcome of the Porphyryne cycle.

That this song is followed by the reference to Enion who stalks "round the Golden Feast"³⁹, finally marks Blake's adherence to Neoplatonism. We can see this particularly in Enion's reference to the spider being taken from its web⁴⁰, which bears the same message as Isaiah ch 59 vv.5-6:

They ... weave the spider a web ... their webs shall not become
garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works

For each is an image of people who chose their own abstracted judgement over spiritually purified values. They make a web of those values with which to entrap the world, but the web being only of themselves, and not of the world, shows that the solipsism of both the unjust of Isaiah and the revellers at Urizen's feast are devoid of any real sustenance in their view of the world. Thus, Blake's fallen people of Reason may be plucked from their web by a famished bird, because their viewpoint of the world does not account for anything but that viewpoint. And in the same way, Isaiah's unjust people will never wear the web they have spun because before they can finish it, the Lord will descend to the land to make it Beulah.

Thus, with Biblical backing for Taylorian Platonism we will find in the next chapter, Blake could write the rest of his poem *Vala*, as an account of the completion of the series of purifications of the spirit in matter in order to slough off the delusions of Urizen, and to reach the predicted time of the revelation of the fixed laws of the Universe, where artificers would become perfect. But this is only to read one of the layers of rewriting: of *Vala* upon *Text A*. The later additions

will take us further into the developing metaphysics of the Contrary, and into the complexities of Blake's position on Plato's philosophy vis a vis the problems of the fixed laws of the universe.

Notes:

- 1 - Blake, Annotations to Bacon, E 620.
- 2 - MHH plate 11. See also Chapter 2 above for a discussion of this temporality.
- 3 - H. M. Margoliouth, *William Blake's Vala: Blake's Numbered Text* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956). [Cited as Margoliouth].
- 4 - Which he notes himself in E 818.
- 5 - Margoliouth, p.157.
- 6 - We can only be certain that the idea of *The Second Book of Urizen* was abandoned after 1818 when copy G of *The Book of Urizen* was printed with the word First erased from the title page.
- 7 - The name Tharmas appears for the first time on 6R line 16, Margoliouth, p.79, after the mating of Enion and the scaly serpent.
- 8 - See Margoliouth, p.78, 5V line 13: p.79, 6R line 2.
- 9 - Ibid. p.79, 6R line 13.
- 10 - Ibid. p.80, 7R lines 10/11.
- 11 - Bloom's commentary, in E 905.
- 12 - PAE, p.185-6.
- 13 - Daman, *A Blake Dictionary*, p.132.
- 14 - Copy H, this date is suggested in *The Illuminated Blake* ed. by David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p.158. The date of this alteration will also be important for our understanding of Blake's reading of Thomas Taylor's translations of Plato, discussed in Chapter 12, however it is not completely certain. Erdman writes:

The prefatory plate is found only in copies H and K, the latter on paper watermarked 1818-20, the former perhaps dating from 1800. The etching of the plate with idiosyncratic serifs on the g's can have been

done as late as 1803. Thus the poem may be a late addition, though it may have been early and held back and only selectively published.

What is important for our argument however is that it was written and engraved before 1803.

15 - See below for a discussion of this idea.

16 - Frontispiece, un erased and in ink.

17 - For example, both *Milton* and *Jerusalem* are dated 1804 which is more probably the date of their inception rather than the date of their writing or engraving, which must have taken many years.

18 - Isaiah 62. 4.

19 - Margoliouth, p.75, 2V lines 2/3.

20 - Ibid. line 6.

21 - Ibid. line 7.

22 - Ibid. line 16.

23 - Ibid. 3R line 8.

24 - Ibid. p.76, 3R line 20.

25 - Nelson Hilton, 'The Sweet Science of Atmospheres in *The Four Zoas*' in *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* (Summer, 1978), p.80. [Cited as Hilton].

26 - Isaac Newton, *Opticks: or A Treatise of the Reflections, Refractions and Colours of Light*, 4th edn (London, 1730).

27 - *Newton's Papers and Letters*, ed. by M. Cohen (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University, 1958).

28 - Hilton, p.84.

29 - Introduction to Isaac Newton, *Principia Mathematica* (London, 1687).

30 - CWP, I, piii/iv.

31 - E 863.

32 - E 511.

33 - It must be a name rather than any other word here because of the word 'his' or 'her' under the ink blot must refer back to a name.

Erdman suggests with some confidence that the erased name is 'Vala', in E 825, but this is hard to accept because there is not enough space for four letters, one of which is capitalized. Also, the argument following about the erased 'his' would point to the original name being masculine. Andrew Lincoln has suggested that the word erased could be 'Man', which fits both criteria. It is, of course, impossible to argue for any of these alternatives with absolute certainty, and with the fact of Blake's layering of writing on the page, a combination of several or all of these alternatives would not be unlikely.

Nevertheless, we have limited the argument to the idea that the erased name was 'Los', and while realising that this is somewhat of an artificial device can argue no further than to point out that such a choice is the most heuristic in the present work.

34 - *The Book of Urizen* Plate 18.

35 - All these are additions to Text A, on FZ Page 11.

36 - FZ Page 13, 7R.

37 - FZ Page 14, (7V lines 10 & 11).

38 - *The Book of Urizen* Plate 19.

39 - FZ Page 18, 9V line 8.

40 - FZ Page 18, 9V line 4.

Chapter 7 - Night I of *The Four Zoas*.

The first alteration to the poem between the second and third phases of the arbitrary stabilizations of our reading is to its title, changing from *Vala* to *The Four Zoas*. Bloom¹ accounts for the word 'Zoas' as Blake taking the Greek plural word 'Zoa' from the Revelation of St. John the Divine, and making it into an English plural by adding the 's'. This in turn is traced back to the vision of Ezekiel in his first chapter, which Bloom calls 'a vision of God's glory', where four living creatures together produce the likeness of a man. Bloom looks no further into Ezekiel and suggests that the Zoas together go to make up Albion, the name given to Blake's Eternal Man in an addition to the subtitle. In this way, Bloom would read *The Four Zoas* as little more than a Christian interpretation added to the Neoplatonic fall and redemption plot of *Vala* which we saw in phase two in our reading.

Bloom corroborates his suggestion that the poem is about St. John's renewal of Ezekiel's vision with an appeal to the two references to St. John's gospel written at the side of lines 4, 5 and 6. These he says are "intended to establish the relevance of Albion and the Zoas myth to a vision of Christianity"², and with the idea expressed in them of being one in the Father with Jesus: this would appear to be quite logical. Thus Bloom reads *The Four Zoas* as following the same movement of the Evangelist from the early gospel promise of being one with the Father in the future, to the great unveiling of the nature of being in the Revelation of his later life³.

That Blake would have considered the authors of these two books of the Bible as one and the same may be deduced from the readily available Biblical scholarship of the "Family Bibles" which were prevalent at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. These Bibles presented

the King James Authorized version of the text along with illustrations and copious notes added by an editor taken from the work of eminent writers.

In the *Protestant Family Bible*⁴, to which Blake contributed several plates, readers were assured that in AD 96:

St. John is banished into the isle of Patmos by Domitian, and there receives and writes his Revelation. After the death of Domitian, St. John returns to Ephesus, and, at the request of the church, writes his gospel.

As well as this, there is a consensus that St. John - the disciple whom Jesus loved - was closest to Jesus, and learned more from him than the other apostles. This is used by the commentator to the same Bible to account for the greatly differing subject matter of the fourth gospel:

The three evangelists St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, have treated of our Redeemer's life in a very narrow compass, and in a very succinct manner, which was sufficient for their purpose, the conversion of the Jews. The world, however, has suffered no loss by the brevity of the first historians, as the Holy Spirit, from the beginning, intended to raise up one to write a history of Jesus, in which some of the principle transactions of our life, omitted by the preceding historians should be supplied, to the great praise of their modesty, and the universal edification of the church. It evidently appears, that St. John wrote his gospel for the use of the world in general; and published it in some of the Gentile countries, long after the writings of the other Evangelists were sent abroad.

This generalizing of Christianity by St. John to the peoples of the world is glossed in a note to the first verse of the first chapter of his gospel:

To impress every reader with a sense of Christ's dignity as God, the evangelist has given an account of his preexistence in quality of the *Logos*, or *Word of God*, and Creator of the World. The word *Logos*, which St. John very beautifully applies to the eternal Son of God, signifies, according to Greek etymology, both *discourse* and *reason*.

Which idea reads uncannily like a mirror image of a passage from Taylor's introduction to his 1804 translation of Plato:

Let not the reader be surprised at the solitariness of the paths through which I shall attempt to conduct him, or at the novelty of the objects which will present themselves in the journey: for perhaps he may fortunately recollect that he has travelled the same road before, that the scenes were once familiar to him, and that the country through which he is passing is his native land.⁵

For this journey through a foreign land to familiar territory can be mapped on to Taylor's identification of Protestantism with Plato's project as seen by Proclus: one of spiritual purification through bodily self-denial. In other words, the separation and return to the *Logos*, seen as either The Word of God, or the transcendental Ideas of Plato. In this way, it is possible to read Taylor's influence upon Blake as Christianizing, and to use this information to support Bloom's reading of *The Four Zoas* as Blake's return from his individual vision of apocalypse in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, to a more orthodox Christianity.

through the influence of Christian Neoplatonism. But this would be to ignore the full implications which Blake's quotation in Greek at the top of Page 3 of *The Four Zoas* from the St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians has for his opinion of St. John's supposed Neoplatonism.

St. Paul writes of wrestling "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." This would easily fit into the mould of the revolutionary Lambeth cycle, or even the Neoplatonic idea of spiritual purification; but it is not the Revolutionary prophet who added this epigram, nor is it the addition of the writer of *Vala* who claims that whoever reads his poem and "with his intellect he comprehend" shall quake the heavens and move the earth; rather this is the addition of the poet whose concern has altered to one of the connection between the body and the spirit, and the oddly similar way in which both Plato and St. John were understood to reconcile the two.

For where Bloom reads Ezekiel's four living creatures as constituent of Albion, he would appear to be mistaking the understanding of these creatures which was most prevalent in Blake's time. Another Family Bible of the time⁶ glosses Ch. 1 v 5 of Ezekiel:

Out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And
this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man⁷

with the note "They had human form", which we shall see was the case from Blake's own drawings. Although this might suggest some sort of analogy with the idea that God created man in his own image, and that these living creatures are four spirits *within* man, if we look at the second part of Ezekiel's vision:

Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth,
by the living creatures, with his four faces. And when the living
creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures
were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.⁸

This connection of wheel with living creature may be seen to be the imaginative source for the illustration of Page 82 of *The Four Zoas*, where a woman is seen running with a hoop on which stars are drawn, and on Page 104, where another woman is seen pushing a much larger hoop on which smaller hoops or perhaps eyes are drawn. That Ezekiel describes the wheels as rings, "and their rings were full of eyes round about them" gives further information to the second drawing. More specifically drawn from Ezekiel's dream is Blake's painting "Ezekiel's Wheels"⁹, in which a male figure is depicted with three visible human heads (rather than Ezekiel's ox, eagle, bull and human). This figure has two wings, and is carried upon a whirling wheel on which are drawn eyes within stars, and which has another wheel attached inside it by spokes. Below the figure is the prophet, and above it a seated male figure with his right arm raised in benediction. With the letter to Butts of July 1803 which also mentions Ezekiel's dream with reference to Blake's setting his face like flint against the World¹⁰, this shows the return in interest in Ezekiel which had submerged after the writing of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where Ezekiel dines with Blake and Isaiah.

This curious combination of ring or wheel and human form is explained by Ezekiel in Ch. 1 v 20:

Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels

Thus, Ezekiel's vision is one of a *combined* body and spirit, where the spirit is seen as a mechanism which is described in terms of mechanical wheels. For example, in another 'Family Bible', Samuel Smith describes the function of the wheels in very scientific terms:

The wheels being supposed spherical or round every way as a globe by an exact and curious framing of two wheels one in the other, the four semi-circles which are in the two whole wheels may be well taken for those four sides on which those wheels do move, and such a wheel will readily be turned on all points of the compass, as a ball on a billiard table. They had no occasion to go back and turn as we see other chariots and coaches do, putting back somewhat to alter their course, nothing could divert them or alter their course so firm and sure are the methods, so unalterable and constant the purpose of God and so invariable the obedience and observance of holy angels¹¹

Damon suggests that this type of mechanics symbolizes Aristotelian logic, the basis of dogmatism¹², and in the light of this, it is interesting that the last addition to *Night I* mentions wheels as producers of Eternal Death:

Terrific ragd the Eternal wheels of intellect terrific ragd
The living creatures of the wheels in the Wars of Eternal Life
But perverse roild the wheels of Urizen & Luvah back reversd
Downwards & outwards consuming in the wars of Eternal Death.¹³

Here as in the Notebook poem discussed in Chapter Six above, we have a tripartite opposition where some form of Reason which pretends towards clarity

(here represented by the wheels of Urizen and Luvah) is opposed by a combination of two parts. In the notebook poem it was a loose affiliation between Newton and Jesus, connected alone by purpose, whereas in *The Four Zoas*, Reason is opposed by the combination of Living Creature and Wheel of Intellect which are seen to be the way to Eternal Life. There is also a change in emphasis in the outcome of following Reason alone: from being deluded by a dream, to moving downwards towards Eternal Death.

Thus Blake's writing no longer illuminates the path of spiritual purification in matter; rather, Pure Reason is seen to be in conflict with body and spirit between Eternal Life and Eternal Death. To look again at the reference in Blake's epigram to spiritual wickedness therefore seems to tell of spiritual wickedness in very high places indeed. For if the opening of St. John's gospel is writing of the form of the Platonic Logos which is a realm of Reason without matter, he is, for Blake, as guilty of the mistake of separating the spirit from the body in so-called purification as Aristotle and the Neoplatonists were in their misreading of Plato's Ideas as stable and subsistent universals¹⁴, taken as the desirable outcome of bodily suffering. In fact, these transcendental Ideas are the "Eternal Death" against which the Living Creatures in their Wheels begin the battle for "Eternal Life" in the quotation above. And it is this realization of Blake's which we will find prevails in this the third phase of our reading of *The Four Zoas*.

The most obvious rewriting of lines on the much altered Page 3 between *Vala* and *The Four Zoas* is the replacing of lines 2-4 of the earlier poem by lines 2 and 3 of the later. The effect of this at such a crucial part of the poem is to change the whole emphasis of the poem from being a statement which is transformative of the world by the intellect, to a statement of reaction against the

intellect trying to change the world. The import of transformation which the poem will effect from the opening lines of *Vala* is succinct and clear:

And thus beginneth the Book of Vala which whosoever reads
If with his intellect he comprehend the terrible sentence
The heavens shall quake the earth shall move & shudder & the mountains
With all their woods, the streams & valleys wail with diamal fear¹⁵

The altered meaning of the opening lines of *The Four Zoas* is less so. The first change Blake made was to alter the tense of lines three and four to read:

The heavens quakd the earth was movd & shudderd & the mountains
With all their woods, the streams & valleys waild in dismal fear

These lines were then erased and overwritten by two lines which were originally concurrent with them, and now appear as lines 2 and 3:

Hearing the march of long resounding strong heroic Verse
- Marshall'd in order for the day of Intellectual Battle

Considering this series of alterations, we can see that the change in tense of the erased lines which describe the quaking of heaven and earth from future to past, gives weight to the argument that it is the "long resounding strong heroic Verse" that "marshall'd in order for the day of Intellectual Battle" which caused the Aged Mother's Song to shake the heavens with wrath. Therefore, in *The Four Zoas*, the earth and heaven no longer will quake because of Blake's poem, but were already quaking because of the effect of the strong heroic verse of intellectual battle.

This reference to strong heroic verse seems to be aimed at Milton, for it is with a reference to the same vision of Ezekiel in Book VI of *Paradise Lost* that the poet suggests the Messiah as the mechanism of the fall of Satan.

No less on either side tempestuous fell
His arrows, from the fourfold visaged Four,
Distinct with eyes, and from the living wheels
Distinct alike with multitude of eyes.
One spirit in them ruled, and every eye
Glared lightning, and shot forth pernicious fire
Among the accursed, that withered all their strength
And of their wonted vigour left them drained.
Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fall'n¹⁶

That this acts as a paradigm of the fall of man and the requirement of spiritual cleansing (provided by the eyes of the wheels of intellect) necessary for regaining paradise echoes the plot of *Vala*. But the shift in tense in the rewritten opening lines of *The Four Zoas* shows that this action has already happened, paradise has been lost and regained, although this is nevertheless the starting point of the new poem: and the cause of the Aged Mother singing with wrath.

Thus the new beginning harks back to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

As a new heaven is begun, and it is now thirty three years since its advent, the
Eternal Hell revives.¹⁷

but instead of Swedenborg, it is Milton that Blake is criticizing in *The Four Zoas* for having set up a system in which it is required to talk to angels and not to

devils: to work out the mechanics of the spirit and ignore the needs of the supposedly evil body. Where Milton describes the Messiah casting out Evil by means of the eyes of spirit within the wheels - the intellect having power over the body - Blake sees that it is this very process which has caused pain in the Aged Mother. Therefore we can see that the third phase of the poem is one in which Contraries are reinstated over Neoplatonic goals, and good as well as evil are seen to be necessary for progression.

This post-apocalyptic temporality is further suggested by the addition of the second piece of Greek: "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us", beneath the references to St. John's gospel, and alongside the description of the mechanics of the spirit in the tercet beginning "Four Mighty Ones are in every Man". For if the Word had already been made flesh, then all were already one in the Father with Jesus even if they did not recognize this fact. And in this way, Blake ironizes his own earlier attempt at mapping out the machinery of the spirit as a method of changing the world to achieve apocalypse.

Additions to Page 4 bring further evidence to the argument that *The Four Zoas* is post-apocalyptic in design. The first of these is the erasure of "Like Sons and Daughters" to describe Urthona's emanations in Eden, and its replacement by "Fairies of Albion, afterwards Gods of the Heathen". This marks a return in Blake's understanding of generation from the paternalism of the Neoplatonic system, where everything refers back to the pre-existent unity (sons and daughters referring to their parents); to that of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* where original clarity has been lost within systems imposed for reasons of power (Fairies of Albion becoming Gods of the Heathen¹⁸). Here we may recall that both of the major readings of *The Four Zoas* considered in Chapter 5 above resorted to some type of "inward communication" which this non-paternalistic generation

evokes, but that both readings were nevertheless based on an idea of generation that followed St. Augustine's view of memory, which is instigated by and instigates generation, and thus failed to escape the fall and resurrection myth of language. Also, as we saw in Chapter 2 above, an understanding of language gained from an Augustinian ostensive paradigm of language learning begs the question of how language was first instigated. For language thus grounded requires a Godhead to act as a solid foundation or ends up in infinite regression. Therefore, this minor addition seems to suggest that it is the avoidance of a layered view of generation that would then seem to be Blake's project in *The Four Zoas*.

Vital in importance for this argument is the way in which this understanding of generation alters the meaning of the lines "the Auricular Nerves of Human Life/ Which is the Earth of Eden" which are extant in both of the stable moments of the poem which we are considering. In *Vala*, this designation gives a groundbase for the trajectory of Los as a prophet and the cycle of purification and return to spirit. In Eden he was Urthona where words were first given their true meanings. Thus the point in the future when Los becomes Urthona again is predicted by Los's prophecy as the time when words fall again with Edenic truth upon the ears. But in *The Four Zoas*, this placing of earth's Eden within the ear after a quotation about Jesus as the Word having already come suggests a mechanism of meaning in which a word once heard is already in its Edenic state and is comprehended fully without any need for reference to a higher level of generation to be regained after Fall. Meaning is part of the process of hearing, and the separation out of Los as the prophet of some futural fulfilment of meaning must therefore be seen as a debasement of the Auricular Nerves by the imposition of systems which cloud the clarity inherent in language: as part of the process of the Fairies of Albion becoming Gods of the Heathen: as a part of the mapping out of the mechanism of

the spirit, and forgetting the blood and tissue of the body which also has its part in understanding.

The first major marginal addition on Page 4 dramatizes this in changes made to a speech of Tharmas. In *Vala*, Tharmas' speech concerns his and Enion's becoming victim to the living, following the Neoplatonic cycle of immersion of the spirit in matter. In *The Four Zoas*, the speech has been altered to Tharmas mourning for the theft of Jerusalem from him by Enion. Here, Jerusalem - the form of all men's Emanations - was hidden by Tharmas after 'The men have recieved their death wounds'¹⁹. The dealing of death wounds, marked by the men's loss of Jerusalem - which becomes the ultimate earthly state in the later poetry - to Tharmas who is called "Parent Power" would, in Neoplatonic terms, be the logical outcome of the death of the spirit in matter and the surrendering of emanations to a figure higher up in level of generation. This process would be expected to end up in the purification of Jerusalem by its reference to the higher element. But in the *The Four Zoas*, this cycle is disrupted by Enion taking Jerusalem from Tharmas and preventing her return to the men, and thus also preventing the completion of the whole purification process.

In this way, where in *Vala* we saw that Enion mourned the loss of the freedom of being spirit in the purification process, in *The Four Zoas* her reply to Tharmas is motivated by anger at his taking part in a process in which "All Love is lost" and which produces "Right & Duty instead of Liberty", as part of the imposition of a system which claims to produce purification, and hides the fact that absolute purity is unattainable. It is this same anger which has motivated her to steal Jerusalem from Tharmas and is derived from the fact that she has found sin in him.

The three further marginal additions to Page 4 give Tharmas' weeping response to Enion's theft, claiming that he is almost perfect, and that to look too

carefully at anything will turn up some defects. But he falls back upon his Neoplatonic reasoning in the first addition to Page 5. This is worth careful examination, for it introduces the problematic which concerns much of the rest of the poem :

In Eden Females sleep the winter in Soft silken veils
Woven by their own hands to hide them in the darksome grave
But Males immortal live renewed by female deaths, in soft
Delight they die & they revive in spring with music and songs²⁰

This parasitism of the Males upon the Females follows the Neoplatonic opposition of spirit and body, and the privileging of spirit over matter. It is seen to have failed from the start as Jerusalem - the endpoint of purification - is so easily stolen. But Enion alone is also seen to fail immediately afterwards:

Enion said Farewell I die I hide from thy searching eyes
So saying from her bosom weaving soft sinewy threads
A tabernacle for Jerusalem²¹

This tabernacle is the spectre of Tharmas, woven from the fibres of the corpse, and thus is intended to act as the reverse of Tharmas' story of Eden and the deaths of Females for Males in the Neoplatonic cycle. Instead it is the theoretical map of Tharmas which he himself has mentioned with distaste for "infant joy is beautiful but its anatomy Horrible Ghast & Deadly". Thus immediately it is complete, Enion is shocked because:

She saw her wool begin to animate & not

As garments woven subservient to her hands but having a will
Of its own perverse & wayward²²

This animation is due to Tharmas' circle of destiny completing and the power of the Neoplatonic cycle is demonstrated. Enion's weaving of the spectre is the becoming matter of the spirit - the Neoplatonic process. Thus when Enion takes the spectre from the "loom of Vegetation" it has been purified by her, and turns on her saying:

If thou hast sinn'd & art polluted know that I am pure
And unpolluted & will bring to strict account
All thy past deeds²³

Enion has been duped by Tharmas in her reaction to him, and he has made her do his will despite her own desires. Thus spirit has gained power over the matter by separating from it, as Tharmas says to Enion:

This world is Thine in which thou dwellest that within thy soul
That dark & dismal infinite where Thought roams up & down
Is Mine & there thou goest when with one sting of my tongue
Envenomed thou rollest inwards to the place whence I emergd²⁴

And this process is the formation of Ulro, the state of spirit separated from matter.

Placed as a marginal addition to Page 5, the formation of Ulro as a stable space in Beulah also marks Blake's change of heart in his acceptance of

Neoplatonism. Whereas in *Vaia* the weaving of the Spectre was part of the purification process, in *The Four Zoas*, not only is Neoplatonism seen as a dupe in its claim of future clarity after purification, but also it is criticized in its production of a state of false stability - of spirit separated from body - which is the necessary outcome of its futural place of fulfilment and the abandonment of Beulah as a place of changes.

There is from Great Eternity a mild & pleasant rest

Nam'd Beulah a soft and Moony Universe feminine lovely

Pure mild & Gentle given in Mercy to those who sleep Eternally

Created by the Lamb of God around on all sides within & without the Universal

Man

The Daughters of Beulah follow sleepers in all their Dreams

The Circle of Destiny complete they gave to it a Space

And nam'd the space Ulro & brooded over it in love and care²⁵

The "Circle of Destiny" is a remnant from *Vaia*, where it marked the time of waiting for Tharmas to emerge purified from the weaving process²⁶. However, its repetition for the third time in the section quoted above subverts this possibility, for whereas before the circle was completed the Daughters of Beulah would follow dreamers and make spaces for each changing dream, after the Spectre's claim of its completion in his tricking of Enion, Ulro comes into existence as a single space for all dreams. As such it is the necessary outcome of Tharmas' separation of spirit from matter, for from the perspective of Ulro the Daughters of Beulah would no longer need follow each sleeper, as it would be expected that all dreams in Ulro would be fulfilled as they were thought. Thus, Ulro appears like the fictive stable element which underpins St. Augustine's generative view of

memory: it acts as a guarantee for the subsistence of ideas as stable entities, in other words it is Plato's Realm of Ideas.

To have written of the creation of that which is said to be ineffable is to have traced its indigence and proved it reliant on something else. In the case of the rewriting of *The Four Zoas*, we can thus understand this in terms of Blake's rejection of Taylorian Neoplatonism in favour of the Plato of the *Parmenides*.

Because of its direct criticism of Socrates and Ideas, Taylor comes early to the *Parmenides* in his introduction to the *Complete Works of Plato*, attempting to identify the Good of the Republic with the One described by the Eleatic philosopher. This is undertaken by an attempt to show that both are:

not only above soul and intellect, but [are] even superior to being itself²⁷

That is, that both are indigent and ineffable, and therefore perfect and a solid basis for the grounding of truth.

In pursuit of this end, Taylor places all the emphasis in his reading of the *Parmenides* on the word "One", rather than on the verb of existence which is what is really at trial in this dialogue²⁸. Taylor writes:

The first hypothesis therefore of his *Parmenides* in which all things are denied of this immense principle, concludes as follows: *'The One therefore is in no respect. So it seems. Hence it is not in such a manner as to be one, for thus it would be being, & participate of essence: but as it appears, the One neither is One, nor is, if it be proper to believe in reasoning of this kind. It appears so. But can anything either belong to, or be affirmed of that which is not? How can it be? Neither therefore does any name belong to it, nor discourse, nor*

any science, nor sense, nor opinion. It does not appear that there can. Hence it can neither be named, nor spoken of nor conceived by opinion, nor be known nor perceived by any being. So it seems. And here it must be observed that this conclusion respecting the highest principles of things, that He is perfectly ineffable and inconceivable, is the result of a most scientific series of negations, in which not only all sensible & intellectual beings are denied of him, but even natures the most transcendently allied to him, his first and most divine progeny.²⁹

Thus the indigence of the One (which, for Taylor is God) is established by its being independent of all other things, but in a way which leaves Taylor open to the accusation that he "publishes doubt & calls it knowledge"³⁰. For the same passage of the *Parmenides* can be read, as we saw in Chapter 4 above, as a questioning of the use of universal terms independently of anything to which they refer. This type of analysis can be performed on any universal term, such as "Law".

This word, when deprived of its references to laws of matter and mind, the law of nature, or the law of the land, can neither be said to exist nor lack existence. "Law" is perfectly abstract - as much as "the One" or "God" when taken free of context. But this does not give sufficient reason for making it a stable basis for truth.

As Benjamin Jowett writes of the *Parmenides*:

To have the true use of words we must compare them with things, in using them we acknowledge that they seldom give a perfect representation of our meaning: — there is nothing true which is not from some point of view untrue, nothing absolute which is not also relative.³¹

In the interpretations of Taylor and Jowett, we can see the elements of the tripartite opposition at work in *The Four Zoas*. That of Taylor which leads to "Eternal Death" favours pure Reason, pure abstraction; and that of Jowett which leads to "Eternal Life", favours the combination of the Living Creatures and their Wheels, the phenomenal taken with the real.

In this way, Blake abandons Taylor's first axiom that: "The unindigent [which is Ulro] is naturally prior to the indigent"³², in favour of the formulation he might have read on the same page of Taylor's introduction: "if they [*spirit and body*, for Blake] are mutually in want of each other, each being indigent of the other in a different respect, neither of them will be the principle"; for they will be Contrary, equally necessary for progression.

Thus we must understand Ulro as "Error"³³ not in some ultimate sense, for that would be self-contradictory in terms of the Contrary, but as an error in the history of metaphysics of having attempted to search out stable universals. For although universals will always seem to be ultimate and ineffable, they are no more than a derivation from what is the case

Returning to *The Four Zoas* we can now understand Los as the fit child of Ulro, the first born of generation. For his process of prophecy is the Neoplatonic call for purification until the most abstracted spirit can be attained: the supposed truth of the Universals. And this is the process we read of him learning at his mother's knee in the addition to the margin of Page 9:

Then Eno a daughter of Beulah took a Moment of Time
And drew it out to Seven thousand years with much care and affliction
And many tears & in Every year made windows into Eden
She also took an atom of Space and opened its centre

into infinitude & ornamented it with wondrous art
Astonished sat her sisters of Beulah to see her soft affections
To Enion & her children & they pondered these things wondering
And they Alternate kept watch over the Youthful terrors
They saw not yet the hand divine for it was not yet reveal'd
But they went on in Silent Hope & Feminine repose

Here the smallest particles are spread out to their uttermost as objects of study for Los, Enion and Enitharmon in order that they become "windows into Eden", or the way to reach the fulfilment of pure abstraction along the course of Biblical/prophetic time. But these constructs of time and space are only the view of one of the Daughters of Beulah, Eno, and the others see them as "soft affections" while they continue as before furnishing the dreams of others than the young prophet and his female counterpart. For the single abstracting gesture, seeing all (Biblical/prophetic) time out of time, and all space out of space is only one way to understand these two elements. In other words, this method must forget that there are other viewpoints - those furnished by the other Daughters of Beulah to other individuals - in its attempt to be the most stable of accounts of space and time³⁴.

This is a slightly different account of Ulro from that discussed above, but it must be remembered that this is one level down in generation, thus it is at one level of forgetfulness from its origin. Thus Eno's is a moony space, a space of reflected light, light which will be regained at the end of the poem according to the process of prophecy - from the perspective of Ulro.

The inclusion of Ulro gives a similar, although reversed motive for Blake's striking out of the addition to Page 11³⁵. This is an addition to Los's riposte to Enitharmon's dream of Vala entering the brain while Urizen sleeps.

Refusing to behold the Divine image which all behold
And live thereby he is sunk down into a deadly sleep
But we immortal in our own strength survive by stern debate
Till we have drawn the Lamb of God into our mortal form
And that he must be born is certain for One must be all
And comprehend within himself all things both small & great
We therefore for whose sake all things aspire to be & live
Will so revive the Divine Image that amongst the Reprobate
He may be devoted to Destruction from his mothers womb

The Neoplatonic structure of this erased section is clear: the Eternal Man has fallen into matter and it is only with the reviving of the Divine Image in him, by the efforts of Los and Enitharmon that he can be returned to life. To bring this about, Los wants to draw "the Lamb of God into our mortal form", and because of his prophetic powers he knows this will come about at some future time. However, after the description of the formation of Ulro as a single abstracted space in which Los and Enitharmon live, the placing of the coming of Oneness at a future time is a contradiction to the terms of Ulro, and therefore has to be erased. Consonant with this, we can see that Blake's vision of Los has changed dramatically between *Vala* where he is the true prophet of redemption, to *The Four Zoas*, where he has become the false prophet of a constructed salvation. Thus the addition is struck out.

In the light of this, if we reread the whole interchange between Los and Enitharmon on pages 9, 10, 11 & 12, we can follow the working of Ulro and the reason for the onset of the battle which rages for the next seven nights.

Added to Page 9, are three lines which give a clue to the nature of Enitharmon, for just after the designation of Los as controlling time and Enitharmon space, we are told:

But [she] had no power to weave a Veil of covering for her Sins
She drave the Females all away from Los
And Los drave all the Males from her away

However, in the second part of Enitharmon's song, which is in a sense narrated by The Eternal Man (as it tells of his dream) we hear that he thinks Enitharmon is veiled:

Why dost thou weep as Vala? & wet thy veil with dewy tears.
In slumbers of my night repose, infusing a False morning?
Driving the Female Emanations away from Los

This mistake can only be because of the construction of Ulro, for if Enitharmon controls 'the spaces, regions, desert, flood & forest', and the Immortals live, as Los says in the Brain of Man. The Eternal Man ought to be able to see these things clearly through her. That he cannot, and calls Enitharmon a 'False morning', must be because he thinks she has deferred revealing them to him in some way. But as she cannot veil even her sins, with the fact that the complaint of The Eternal Man comes after Enitharmon's story of Luvah and Vala flying up from his heart to his brain, we must conclude that The Eternal Man has constructed the veil himself in his sleep.

We can understand this best perhaps with reference to T.S. Eliot's problems with Blake's writing which we discussed in Chapter 1. There we saw

how Eliot's metaphysics vacillated between the temporal priority of Immediate Experience, in which he turned to history for certainty in what he perceived; and the logical priority of Immediate Experience in which he privileged his present perceptions. The falling back of each of these into the other is akin to the driving off of Emanations from each other by Los and Enitharmon. Since Los controls time, Enitharmon's driving off females from him may be equated with the failure of the temporal priority of Immediate Experience, and that Enitharmon controls spaces, the effect of Los driving off males from her is to put off the clarity which her logical priority offers. In both cases this results in the deferral of fulfilment from the immediate (unmediated), which deferral is the action of abstracting to the Ideal.

And it is their taking up of this project of idealization which occurs when Luvah and Vala move from the Heart to the Brain of the Eternal Man, for it too is a project of veiling the Immediateness of Experience in its putting off of the fulfilment of the vision of the Eternal Man. Importantly, it is only after this that his name is changed by a later addition to be called "Fallen" by Los. Thus for the Eternal Man, the clarity of his vision is lost, not because of anything problematic with his vision, but because of an alteration in his understanding of what his vision is which has come upon him while he and Urizen were asleep.

Furthermore, when Los replies angrily to Enitharmon that it was Vala whom the Eternal Man tried to comfort, we can see the method of his deferring fulfilment, for if Enitharmon divulges (as she must for she cannot veil even her sins) that it was her beneath the veil, the certainty of space (the logical priority of Immediate Experience) will be gained. Here Blake shows the power of the foiling action of temporality upon the logical priority of Immediate Experience. For, by retelling the story in his way *after* she has told hers, he confuses what might have been the case with another plausible reading of the same percepts. Thus, with the

use of the temporal priority of Immediate Experience, genealogy may be set up as donor of all meaning with its requirement of purification to find the truth held at a distance, as it functions against the model of Ulro: which is to say that Los's genealogy functions with an underlying model of truth as *fixed and unchangeable*, whereas Enitharmon's logical priority of Immediate Experience has no such caveat. Thus it is the formation of Ulro as a late addition to *The Four Zoas*, along with its imposition upon themselves and others by Los and then Urizen, which becomes the motive force behind the irony of the rest of the poem.

Because of the imposition upon himself of Ulro, its immediate effect cannot be clear to Los's perspective, but is understood by Enitharmon who calls down the logic that is Urizen, scorning Los with the words:

Threaten not me O visionary thine the punishment
The Human Nature shall no more remain nor Human acts
Form the rebellious Spirits of Heaven but War & Princedom & Victory³⁶

For she can see that by placing all the emphasis of truth onto the unchangeable real at the expense of the phenomenal (Ezekiel's wheels at the expense of the living creatures), Los condemns the body and its perceptions to destruction. Thus, where Los has seen "the shower of blood"³⁷ as a simple murder of Vala to reveal the truth at some time in the future, Los's action in creating Ulro has in fact placed Luvah and Vala in "an orb of blood"³⁸. That is to say, by placing truth at the remove of the Ideal within the mythical structure of future revelation of everything all at once, the truth of the revelation myth *itself* also becomes ideal and only to be revealed with all other truth. Thus in the logic of Los's terminology

the death of Vala can never be certain, and prophecy ceases to be a viable method of apprehending truth. At the inevitability of this logic:

Eternity groand & was troubled at the Image of Eternal Death³⁹

while Urizen descends from the brain of The Wandering Man. Here Blake added a line in pencil:

And the one must have murderd the other If he had not descended⁴⁰

This line illuminates the power of the necessity which underpins the logic which Enitharmon saw in Los's action, for, in that logic may function to arbitrate on a purely spiritual or ideal level, it would be self-contradictory for reasoning to remain inside the sleeping man as part of his physicality. Thus Urizen is freed to become "God from Eternity to Eternity"⁴¹ as it is his logic which has shown that Los's prophecy is faulty.

The large additions to Page 12 fall into two sections, and the ink lines which direct the placement of the addition written at the top of the page between two sections of the addition written on the left hand side of the page, suggest that this was the earlier of the two. Working from Erdman's line arrangement, the first addition would be lines 9 - 17 plus lines 30 and 31. Following Urizen's claim to divinity, this addition sees Urizen and Los going into partnership to kill Vala and thereby reveal the truth as long as Los follows the law of Urizen. In our present reading, we may see this alliance as following that between Plato and Christianity which Blake had read in Taylor's *Complete Works of Plato*. As such, with Los's undefended capitulation to Urizen, this page leads easily into the marriage festivities and through to the ironic picture of the Saviour supporting Man

beneath the Palm and the Oak of Weeping⁴². This original ending of Night 1 would therefore suggest that Los and Urizen, in league with one another, are waiting for the time of purification (for the world of Ezekiel's wheels without the living creatures), whose Eternal Saviour views the body of Man as an Eternal Individuality upon the Rock of Ages. That is to say, who views his task of salvation as the imposition of his single world view that is Ulro.

However, this position is the same as that at the beginning of Night VIII⁴³ which comes about after further titanic struggles between Los and Urizen in the intervening Nights. But in the second set of additions to Page 12, Los does not immediately capitulate to Urizen, and the Page 18 ending of the first night is made provisional by the addition of Pages 19-22. Whether this can be taken as part of Blake's re-visioning of the whole poem from being *The Second Book of Urizen* and *Vala* (beginning from what is now Night 2⁴⁴), cannot be certain, nevertheless, the new ending following from this addition to Page 12 does open up the scope of the poem to give grounds for the action of Nights 2 - 7.

Furthermore, the second addition to Page 12 is itself made up of two parts, the first six lines being in pen, the last five in pencil, being joined by a connecting line in pen of a different quality from that which Blake used to write the first six lines. Such minute tinkering would in itself suggest that this was an important point in the poem, and that the imagery used shows various different stages in Blake's rewriting of the poem would bear this out. The earliest added lines simply short circuit the ironic salvation of the Page 18 ending of the Night:

Los answerd furious art thou one of those who when most complacent
Mean mischief most. If you are such lo! I am also such
One must be master. try thy Arts I also will try mine
For I percieve Thou has Abundance which I claim as mine

Urizen started stood but not Long soon he cried

Obey my voice young Demon I am God from Eternity to Eternity⁴⁵

Los does not accept the offer of power over Luvah because he believes that the truth of what Urizen wants is hidden behind the words. This is consequent upon the functioning of his prophecy and its grounding myth, which does not expect meanings to be clear in the present time. Thus it is not surprising that Urizen is startled, for the functioning of his logic is supposed to be absolutely clear now it has been separated from Albion's body. Initially, therefore, all he need reply is the repetition that he is "God from Eternity to Eternity", and by force of numbers will turn Los back to Enitharmon as the only method the prophet has of opposing him: which is to perfect prophecy as a method of apprehending the truth. In itself this would be enough to set up the expectation of the rest of the battles between Los and Urizen without the added Pages 19 - 22, but it is a very slight incident to set an epic in motion. Perhaps this is the reason that Blake goes further, elaborating on the differences between his main protagonists.

Thus Urizen spoke collected in himself in awful pride

* Art thou a visionary of Jesus the soft delusion of Eternity

Lo I am God the terrible destroyer & not the Saviour

Why should the Divine Vision compell the Sons of Eden

To forego each his own delight to war against the Spectre

The Spectre is the Man the rest is only delusion & fancy⁴⁶

The notion that Urizen is "collected within himself" suggests that his view of the world is internally consistent. Thus he may taunt Los about the inconsistency in prophecy, for where Los needs a Saviour to guarantee the myth structure of his

future revelation, Urizen is self-sufficient in his attempt to gain spiritual purity through the destruction of the body in the quest for the "reality" of the Spectre. It is this taunt then which turns Los back to Enitharmon to find a way to perfect the functioning of prophecy under the aegis of logic, but, an addition to Page 13 dramatically draws the suspension of the teleology of prophecy above the nuptial feast of Los and Enitharmon:

But Luvah & Vala standing in the bloody sky
On high remained alone forsaken in fierce jealousy
They stood above the heavens forsaken desolate suspended in blood
Descend they could not nor from Each other avert their eyes
Eternity appeared above them as One Man infolded
In Luvah's robes of blood & bearing all his afflictions
As the sun shines down on the misty earth Such was the Vision⁴⁷

The real issue in the disagreement between Los and Urizen, the nature of Vala and Luvah, is forgotten: "suspended in blood". In other words, the quest for true knowledge has turned the world upside down⁴⁸. By concentrating on the universalis of the Platonic real rather than the phenomenal (Ezekiel's Wheels rather than the living creatures), Urizen's cry that "The Spectre is the Man the rest is all delusion & fancy" makes body out of spirit and desolate heaven out of lifeblood. Therefore, unknown to Urizen until the next night, Los's temporal deferral will also affect the apprehension of truth gained by logic.

But before this becomes apparent, the corollary to the forgetting of the phenomenal at the rise of Ulro is described in greater detail in the four added pages to Night 1. For rather than individual and perspectival vision being supplied to "those in Great Eternity", as in Baulah (the place of the Lord in the Land), "the

Universal Family" see everything from the point of view of Ulro "As one Man ... & that one Man they call Jesus the Christ". This is the zenith of the Platonic Christ of Thomas Taylor, and that it is ironic would seem clear from the alteration of the name of the mountain from Gilead to Snowdon, and Beth Peor to Conway's Vale, by which Blake suggests that this position does not fit in with the geography of the Bible. Thus it is also ironic that it is messengers from Beulah who come to the "divine presence" of this of false salvation with the news that Albion is sick. This sets in motion the action of the rest of the poem, for, although the Eternals claim to see all "as one Man", from the first interchange - between Urizen and Luvah - it is clear that they do not. Luvah replies to Urizen:

Dictate to thy Equals am not I

The Prince of all the hosts of Men nor Equal known in heaven⁴⁹

They cannot even agree with each other as to how to reach a common goal, and vie with each other over who will finish off the body of Albion in their desire for spiritual purity, the place of Ezekiel's Wheels. Thus in the battles of their desire for supremacy over each other:

Suddenly down they fell all together into an unknown Space

Deep horrible without End Separated from Beulah far beneath⁵⁰

In their internecine warfare the eternals have missed the original point of their action - which was to find true knowledge - and so collapse into functioning on a level in which Beulah is unattainable. Thus while the Eternal Wheels and the living creatures of the wheels rage in wars for Eternal life, in what must be for Blake the true religion of the Contrary which does not exclude either part of an opposition,

the isolated wheels of Urizen and Luvah reversed downwards & outwards
consuming in the wars of Eternal Death⁵¹.

Notes:

1 - E 948.

2 - Ibid.

3 - The gospel of St. John is dated AD 30-33 in the King James Bible, and the Revelation AD 96.

4 - *Protestant Family Bible* Illus. by William Blake (London, 1780).

5 - CWP, I, page iv.

6 - *Bible for the Use of Families*, notes by the Rev G D'Oyly and the Rev R Mont (London, 1839).

7 - Ezekiel 1. 5.

8 - Ezekiel 1. 15 - 19.

9 - Circa 1803-5 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts

10 - Letter 27, E 729, quotes Ezekiel 3. 9.

11 - *The Compleat History of the Old and New Testament: Or a Family Bible*, Notes by S. Smith DD (London, 1735).

12 - Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 273.

13 - FZ Page 22(20), line 571.

14 - See Chapter 4 above.

15 - Added words taken from Keynes reading of *The Four Zoas*.

16 - John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book VI, lines 843 - 851.

17 - MHH plate 3.

18 - Here we may remember that it was a Fairy who spoke to Blake in the new preface to *Europe*, and that Blake tends to project Gods as law givers rather than benign.

19 - FZ Page 4, line 15.

20 - FZ Page 5, ll. 1-3.

- 21 - Ibid. II. 7-9.
22 - Ibid. II. 20-22.
23 - FZ Page 6, II. 10-12.
24 - Ibid. II. 13-15.
25 - Ibid. placed by Erdman as II. 29-37. It will be important for a later argument to note that this section was first written in pencil, and later written over in pen.
26 - Vala 3R, lines 6 and 14.
27 - CWP, I, p.v.
28 - According to Jowett.
29 - Ibid.
30 - Milton Plate 41.
31 - *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon, 1871), II, p.633.
32 - CWP, I, p.vii
33 - *Damon A Blake Dictionary*, p.416.
34 - The second and third lines of this addition originally read:

And drew it out to seventy years with much care and affliction

*

And many tears & in the Seventy years gave vision to the human

In this earlier rendition, the same point is made more clearly, although not specifically for Los. Instead of Biblical or prophetic time, Blake's use of seventy years suggests a single human lifetime of three score years and ten. This emphasizes the individuality of perspective, but at the expense of criticizing Los's prophetic position.

35 - This addition is made in ink rather than the pencil of the previous two. The writing is fairly good, which tends to suggest that it was an earlier addition than the rough notes added in pencil.

36 - FZ Page 11, ll. 22-24.

37 - Ibid. line 14.

38 - FZ Page 12, line 3.

39 - Ibid. line 4.

40 - Ibid. line 6.

41 - Ibid. ll. 8 and 23.

42 - FZ Page 18, line 11.

43 - See Chapter 11.

44 - Which was initially labelled 'Night the First', and now is unnumbered.

45 - FZ Page 12, lines 18 - 23.

46 - Ibid. ll. 24 - 29.

47 - FZ Page 13, ll. 4 - 10.

48 - The parallel here between this idea and Nietzsche's "How the Real world became a Myth" from *Twilight of the Idols*, is striking

49 - FZ Page 22, ll. 1 - 2.

50 - Ibid. ll. 38 - 39.

51 - Ibid. ll. 14 - 15.

Chapter 8 - The Mundane Shell in *The Four Zoas*.

In returning to a brief account of *Vala Night II* it must be remembered that in this phase, Blake's Neoplatonism played out the battle of the poem between Urizen and Luvah in the form of the tripartite opposition of Reason versus Newton and Jesus discussed with reference to the Notebook poem in Chapter 6 above. Thus we can readily draw the analogy between Man giving Urizen power over his "sickening spheres"¹ as he enters "the dark sleep of Death"² and the sleeper of the Notebook poem being ironically bidden to "Sleep on Sleep on while in your pleasant dreams/ Of Reason you may drink of Life's clear streams"³. The remainder of the night then follows the opposition between Reason and Thoughtful Compassion as Urizen tries to build "a Bower for heaven's darling" - the sleeping Man - on "the verge of Non Existence"⁴ - the landscape of his dream. And it is because he is building in a dream that Urizen is "urged by necessity to keep/ The evil day afar"⁵, for the dawning of the day will bring the end of Man's sleep and his dream of Reason's clarity of truth.

In the dream, as in the Bible, it is also a word which calls the forces to build:

*

Luvah and Vala trembling & shrinking beheld the great Workmaster
And heard his Word! Divide ye bands influence by influence
Build we a Bower for heaven's darling in the grisly deep⁶

But this is not a world which the word creates *ex nihilo* as in Genesis or St. John's gospel, instead, the word of Urizen separates things already created "influence by influence", which amounts to arranging them by categories. Here, the parallel between Urizen and the God of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is striking, as both "create"

from undifferentiated chaos. In the extended metaphor, the furnace into which "ore in mountainous masses" is "plung'd" is not heated for the purpose of refining, but, like ore in the smelter, for transforming raw material into some refined product. Simply, Urizen's process of logic as reason is to take actuality and transform it into organized sense data.

Thus we can readily detect the motive for heating up Luvah in the furnace and Vala being fuel for the flames used to melt him, for Urizen needs to categorize the "miracle" of the Notebook poem in order that he may complete his project of understanding all of Nature.

Reason says miracle Newton says doubt
Aye thats the way to make all Nature out

The direct forbear for this need to comprehend miracles would seem to be Hume's *Essay on Miracles*⁷ which was widely discussed at the end of the eighteenth century. In this work Hume denies that belief in miracles can be rationally justified, and therefore by implication points to the necessity for further study of the laws of nature to gain rational understanding of what was hitherto thought to be miraculous.

Therefore, after the furnace has been opened and the melted Luvah run into the channels cut by the "plow of ages", the Sons of Urizen can "weigh the massy Globes then fix them in their awful stations", which is to recast the miraculous in Nature once and for all in a known pattern following known laws, and therefore to make it predictable.

However, having set up this project of complete comprehension Urizen is beset by its relationship to Los and Enitharmon.

And Los & Enitharmon were drawn down by their desires
Descending sweet upon the wind among soft harps and voices
Urizen saw & envied & his imagination was filled
Repining he contemplated the past in his bright sphere
Terrified with his heart & spirit at the visions of futurity
That his dread fancy form'd before him in the unform'd void⁸

For the world in which all things are fixed in their spheres once and for all is totally predictable, and thus prophecy will gain ascendancy over reason, while at the same time prior experience suggests that the world is not like this. Thus Urizen both grumbles at the past and is terrified by the future which might not follow his recasting of things and therefore demand more work of defining from him, or at worst lose Man's faith in him and send Man back to the Neoplatonism of the prophet which allows for wrong outcomes by including the need for more purification.

To avoid this problem, Urizen⁹ enforces his power upon Enion, the first Mother of Nature who alone knows all the secrets of how things really are, and drives her before him as she laments how he makes her tell lies about the world. From this point on, the rest of Vala becomes a struggle between Urizen and Los, with Los being the eventual victor in the revelation of the ninth night which comes as the result of the seven cycles of purification.

The additions to this Night which transform it into *The Four Zoas* radically alter this opposition between Los and Urizen, finding both of them erroneous in their different projects.

The end of Night I left Urizen battling with Luvah for the removal of the occlusion of changing perspectives from the promised clarity of Ulro which has been deferred by the temporality of Los acting upon the clarity of Enitharmon. Of

the six lines added to Page 23, the second gives the most significant clue to the nature of this effect of Ulro¹⁰ upon Albion.

Turning his eyes outward to Self losing the Divine Vision
Albion call'd Urizen

Here we can see that the process of losing the Divine Vision is a relocation of "Self" from inside to outside, a move which recalls the change in location of Vala from Albion's Brain to the sky below Eternity in Night I. Thus this short addition at the beginning of Night II is a reiteration of the whole process of the formation of Ulro by Los and Enitharmon which has moved Vala from Heart to Head to Exterior. However, as we saw at the end of Night I, in this deferral structure Los was foiled by Urizen because of the uncertainty of the status of the salvation he prophesied which allowed logic to gain ascendancy over religion in the stable world of Ulro even before its clarity was gained. And thus Albion calls Urizen rather than Los to assist him regain the clarity of Ulro.

Ulro's clarity is remembered by Albion at this point as the location of "this Voice of Enion", the first mother, in the second of the additions to Page 23:

Whence is this Voice of Enion that soundeth in my Porches¹¹

Thus we can see that rather than gaining clarity, another layer of generation is added to the occlusion of Luvah and Vala in the call to Urizen to assist him.

The structures which Urizen builds in pursuing Albion's desires are named the "Mundane Shell" in a line added in pencil to Page 24¹². Blake does not use the word "Mundane" before this occurrence although it appears many times in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. We might suggest that he is using it here technically as

part of the criticism of Neoplatonism for the word 'Mundane' is employed by Taylor in his introduction to the *Parmenides*:

By ascending from motion we may also after the same manner prove the existence of Ideas. Everybody from its own proper nature is alter-motive, or moved by another, and is indigent of motion externally derived. But the first most proper or principle motion is the power which moves the *mundane wholes*: for he possesses the motion of a mover, and body the motion of that which is moved, and corporeal motion is the image of that energy; but motion in the body is imperfect energy: and imperfect it derives its subsistence from the perfect.¹³

Taylor takes his argument from Proclus, and from the section quoted above we can see that he uses it to prove the existence of an unindigent first mover of things of lower - mundane - order within an opposition of the corporeal and the perfectly abstracted. However, when Blake uses the term, the "Mundane Shell" is built significantly "around the Rock of Albion"¹⁴ which suggests occlusion and generation rather than return to clarity. Thus we can draw a parallel between this and the formation of Ulro, although taken at the next level down in generation, for where Ulro was a stable place for dreams, the Mundane Shell is a concrete corporeality.

The much longer addition to Page 25 makes this point more clearly, the first lines of which read:

Petrifying all Human Imagination Into rock and sand
Groans ran along Tyburns brook and along the river of Oxford
Among the Druid Temples.¹⁵

And this is not written as a desirable outcome for it heralds the ruin of Jerusalem
and her sleeping couch:

Jerusalem came down in dire ruin over all the Earth
She fell cold from Lambeths Vales in groans and Dewy death
The dew of anxious souls the death sweat of the dying
In every pillard hell & arched roof of Albions skies ...
The Daughters of Albion girded around their garments of Needlework
Stripping Jerusalems curtains from mild demons of the hills¹⁶

Thus, *The Four Zoas* account of Urizen's reforging of Luvah which now takes place in "the dreadful furrows/ In Ulro beneath Beulah where the Dead wail Night and Day"¹⁷, is a desperate attempt at limiting the devastations of Los's temporal deferral of revelation by solidifying the stable place of dreams into the stable place of corporeality - that is, in solidifying Ulro as the Mundane Shell around Albion's rock.

Where it has taken long additions to change the thrust of the beginning of this night, a single added line changes the emphasis of Luvah's lament from inside the furnace:

These were the words of Luvah patient in afflictions
*Reasonings from the loins in the unreal forms of Ulros night*¹⁸

For Luvah can no longer be understood as the miraculous, or faith born of miracles seen in Nature which Urizen falsely tries to comprehend in *Vala*, as he is himself a product of the loins, an emanation such as the Spectre of Tharmas woven out of "vein & lacteal". And when his molten form is recast in the furrows in

Ulro to create the Mundane Shell, the expected certainty of Urizen's level of generation is not forthcoming:

With trembling horror pale aghast the Children of Man
Stood on the Infinite Earth & saw these visions in the air
In waters & in the Earth beneath they cried to one another
What are we terrors to one another. Come O brethren wherfore
Was the wide Earth spread all abroad not for beasts to roam
But many stood silent & busied in their families
And many said We see no Visions in the darksome air
Measure the course of that sulphur orb that lights the darksome day
Set stations on this breeding Earth & let us buy & sell
Others arose & schools Erected forming Instruments
To measure out the course of heaven
Stern Urizen ...
Commanding all the work with care & power & severity¹⁹

For the Children of Man comprehend even the concreteness of the Mundane Shell in various ways: some of them wondering at it, some of them still not seeing it, some of them trying to measure it, some of them trying to learn about it, some of them trying to exploit it for profit - and all under the auspices of Urizen, for the different viewpoints reflect the temporal deferral of meaning introduced by Los a generation higher.

Thus Urizen must build and build again, endlessly adding rooms to his palace of metaphysics like a maniac Heidegger, one more room for each different viewpoint, domes and galleries and vast estates laid out:

Twelve Halls after the names of his twelve sons composd
The wondrous building & three Central Domes after the Names
Of his three daughters were encompassd by the twelve bright halls

Every hall surrounded by bright Paradise of Delight
In which are towns & Cities Nations Seas Mountains & Rivers²⁰

Until the whole becomes a work of such complexity that it becomes an emanation
and gains independence from Urizen in the form of Ahania (her unfallen form)
and overwhelms him:

His Shadowy Feminine Semblance here reposd on a White Couch
Or hoverd oer his Starry head & when he smild she brightend
Like a bright Cloud in harvest
When Urizen returnd from his immense labour & travels
Descending She reposd beside him folding him around
In her bright skirts Astonishd & Confounded he beheld
Her Shadowy form now Separate²¹

And thus, just as with Los and Enitharmon before, and Tharmas and Enion before
them, a separation develops between architect and building, spirit and matter,
soul and body: "Two wills they had two intellects & not as in times of old"²², and
with separation, jealousy comes to be exploited by Enitharmon:

He drave the Male Spirits all away from Ahania
And she drave all the Females from him away
And Enitharmon joyd plotting to rend the secret cloud
To plant divisions in the soul of Urizen and Ahania²³

for Urizen's act of building ascends into more and more abstracted mathematical
formations:

Trapeziums Rhombs Rhomboids Parallelograms triple & quadruple
polygonic
In their amazing hard subdued course in the vast deep²⁴

until his project becomes indistinguishable from the Neoplatonism of Los. Both seek the perfectly abstracted forms of Ulro, believing them to hold the reality of the originating father of generation. Thus, Los and Enitharmon are "drawn down by their desires", not because they return to confound Urizen's claim to absolute truth, but because they all use the same method, and truth is deferred absolutely. As Los says to Enitharmon:

Then I am dead till thou revivest me with thy sweet song
Now taking on Ahnias form & now the form of Enion
I know thee not as once I knew thee in those blessed fields
Where memory wishes to repose among the flocks of Tharmas²⁵

But there cannot be any return to this state of mind perfectly overlaid on earthly reality, for in the state of separation the one cannot exist in a way which will co-ordinate or be concurrent with the other. By introducing an epistemological term such as the phenomenal, one cannot then deem it to exist at the same level of generation as the real. So Enitharmon sings at Los's death:

I seize the sphery harp I strike the strings
At the first sound the Golden sun arises from the Deep
And shakes his awful hair
The Eccho wakes the moon to unbind her silvery locks
The golden sun bears upon my song
And Nine bright spheres of harmony rise round the fiery King
The joy of woman is the Death of her most beloved
Who dies of Love for her
In torments of fierce jealousy & pangs of adoration²⁶

The rising of the sun should renew the reflected light of the "moony" world of Beulah, but it will only rise at the death of Los. Thus she finishes her song with a

full statement of the problem of the parallel worlds of philosophical and scientific analysis by reference to perfect forms, for since she is the real which cannot veil itself deferred from recognition by the temporality of interpretations imposed on her by Los and by the separation of architect's plan from building by Urizen, she sings :

Now I am nothing & I sink
And on the bed of silence sleep till thou awakest me²⁷

We have returned to the point of vacillation between the temporal and logical priority of Immediate Experience. For while the plans and mathematical formulations of the temporally minded attempt to purify to return to the origin of forms, they leave the real world further and further behind however much they may seem to approach it asymptotically.

Therefore, once Enitharmon is asleep, Los²⁸ wakes and pursues Enion, first of the separated females "That he might also draw Ahania's spirit into her Vortex", in other words, that he might try to abstract the real element of the next level down in generation in order that the cycle of prophecy continues in the hope that purity will eventually be gained. Thus Enion's lament heard by Ahania lays the foundation of what should be the next level of generation when Urizen expels her and causes his own downfall in the same manner in which he brought down Los.

From this point in *The Four Zoas* until Night VII the manuscript has the look of a fair copy made from earlier notes. Margoliouth claims that Nights III to VI are original to *Vala* but this dating cannot be certain. The only consistent alteration is the substitution the the name "Albion" for some of the occurrences of "Eternal Man", but since this is itself a late addition, possibly dating from after the

renaming of the poem, it does not give support to any claim as to the dating of these nights. Because of this resistance to our present reading method, we shall not give a great amount of space to these nights, and do no more than follow through the story which has been gleaned from the additions to the first and second Nights.

Bloom says of Night III that "The Fall of Urizen is caused by a failure of intellectual desires and by the intellect's revulsion from its own desires."²⁹ This is a convincing observation when taken in conjunction with the largely erased, although nevertheless obviously pornographic illustrations to this night³⁰. Following this line of reasoning the picture on Page 42 is particularly important, for the bottom left hand figure has, according to Erdman, a batwinged "penis on a string"³¹. One could also see this picture as the figure throwing the penis away, which would suggest that Erdman was incorrect in his reading that the central female figure "apparently measures [Cupid's] penis"³². It is possible that she is cutting it off.

If this is the case, we might understand this child and the winged child of the pictures on Pages 39 and 40 to represent Origen, the early Christian theologian who castrated himself in order to be free from thoughts that were unspiritual. What makes this interesting to the present reading of *The Four Zoas* is that Origen was also the greatest of the Alexandrine theologians who attempted to reconcile Christianity with Platonic philosophy through speculative and allegorical interpretations of the Bible. Thus to Blake, he would be as culpable of spiritual wickedness in high places as St. John. Furthermore, placing him lower down in generation than the Saint, Blake shows how this spiritual wickedness was perpetrated throughout Christianity, ending up in the self-annihilative fervour of the people of Night IX.

But it is not possible to draw out a simple derivation like this from a poem which has undergone so many changes. The child must also be seen as Orc as we move downwards in generation; and may even be seen as Los or Tharmas as a reflection upwards in generation. Whichever, this birth of the castrated child marks the end of Urizen's building and the collapse of the Mundane Shell, for the concreteness of the Human Imagination separated from the Universals fails to reveal a stable truth in the same way as Los failed in the creation of Uiro.

Just as Los told the story of Luvah and Vala in a different way to impose his temporality upon the unveiled Enitharmon, Ahania retells the story yet again:

Why didst thou listen to the Voice of Luvah that dread morn
To give the Immortal steeds of light to his deceitful hands ...
 listen to the vision
The vision of Ahania in the slumbers of Urizen
When Urizen slept in the porch & the Ancient Man was smitten³³

But Urizen's fall does not lead directly to another level of generation, for enough levels have been created, and enough fragments have been left to start wars between those who choose to adhere to these appearances of pure truth.³⁴ Although Albion is still carrying Vala, he nevertheless prostrates himself to the truth of his own self-delusion which is Urizen's palace³⁵. This faith placed in him therefore is the moment in which Urizen ignores Ahania's retelling of the first story of the uptake of Vala and declares:

Am I not God said Urizen Who is equal to me
Do I not stretch the heavens abroad or fold them up like a garment³⁶

and throws her out to the edge of Non Entity. This move is complex for although Ahania is in the same place as Enion, her constant fear of "falling into the indefinite"³⁷ inhibits the formation of the next generation even though Urizen's level has proved itself unable to produce revelation. Coming as it does on Page 42, it seems to support the suggestion that there is a correspondence with Origen's self castration, for in excluding his female counterpart Urizen performs much the same self-mutilation.

The imputed result of castration for Origen was the gaining of spiritual purity by removing the possibility of sexual activity. Urizen's Mundane Shell had also been built for the purpose of gaining purity through concrete action, but his building had turned to architecture and his architecture to mathematics in a process which brought him, so he thought, closer to the purity of truth, but actually brought him closer to the spirituality of Los. Therefore when the product of his labour turned back on the process of its completion and proved that he had not reached his goal, excluding Ahania's alternate vision - the architectionics of his building - should have completed his desire for purification like the short cut of castration: removing the external manifestation of an internal problem.

In this way Urizen enforces the separation of mind and matter, making himself ruler of his self-created world of so-called ultimate truths. Therefore where Los always appears with Enitharmon, who as the real world always accompanies the prophet as the possibility of his being wrong, Urizen has cut off the external possibility of his being wrong and has no need for a counterpart. This act finally and completely separates him from the possibility of the revelation of Ulro because it halts generation, an act which brings back Tharmas into the action³⁸.

It might seem odd that the original progenitor of the cycle is revived by its closing off, but Tharmas' return is foreshadowed in Night I when the Spectre of Urthona is driven to his "cavern'd rock" after its separation from his body which is

brought about by the murder of Enitharmon by Tharmas. Here we must remember that Urthona was Los in eternity, and thus with the death of Enitharmon and the beginning of the cycle of spiritual purification, Urthona becomes Los in the world of generation with the hope of his revival as Urthona in the future after purification. Therefore, as Urizen cuts off the hope of this outcome by his exclusion of Ahania, it is logical that the Spectre of Urthona should return as a shadow of the original predicted outcome of the cycle.

Tharmas first laments his separated state which can never be rejoined after the action of Urizen to make all desire ungratifiable:

Deathless for ever now I wander seeking oblivion
In torrents of despair in vain for if I plunge beneath
Stifling I live If dashed in pieces from a rocky height
I reunite in endless torment would I had never risen
From death's cold sleep beneath the bottom of the raging Ocean
And cannot those who once loved ever forget their Love?
Are love and rage the same passion? they are the same in me
Are those who love like those who died, risen again from death
Immortal in immortal torment never to be delivered
Is it not possible that one risen again from Death
Can die! When dark despair comes over me can I not
Flow down into the sea & slumber in oblivion Ah Enion
Deformed I see these lineaments of ungratified desire
The all powerful curse of an honest man be upon Urizen & Luvah³⁹

And then calls upon Los to:

Rebuild this Universe beneath my indignant power
A Universe of Death & Decay Let Enitharmons hands
Weave soft delusive forms of Man
renew thou I will destroy⁴⁰

This would be a renewal of the Neoplatonic cycle of the death of spirit in matter for purification. However, Los refuses this alternative for he has taken Urizen to be his god, and is happier to remain as Los now than to return to being Urthona at some future time, as Urizen offers him certainty in all his predictions.⁴¹ Enitharmon, still under the sway of Los also curses Tharmas, and thus he must find another way to set his cycle in motion again.

This he does by letting loose the Spectre of Urthona as the vehicle of recombining Enitharmon with Los and bringing to fruition his original plan. He rises up before Los and says:

Now all comes into the power of Tharmas. Urizen is fallen
And Luvah hidden in the Elemental forms of Life and Death
Urthona is My Son O Los thou art Urthona & Tharmas
Is God⁴²

Realising that he has hitherto been following Tharmas's cycle, Los is furious and desperately tries to renew the world of Urizen by which he can escape it. But Urizen's world is now fallen for, as Tharmas points out:

Thy Eternal form shall never renew my uncertain prevails against thee⁴³

As we learned in Night I, the whole process was set up to purify the fault of Tharmas, and until it is completed in a run through all of generation he will remain the impure father of all that must itself be impure until purified. Like original sin, Tharmas hangs over the whole of creation. His only hope against the always present uncertainty is for Los to forge "The Links of Fate" one by one out of "Ambiguous words", until he has bounded the "Eternal Mind"⁴⁴ of Urizen - which is to say, until Los has made prophecy as self-sufficient as logic. For whereas logic had no connection to the percepts but was merely the possible structures of

their combination, prophecy was always concerned with perception, and its binding into logic to produce guaranteed outcome will create Fate out of that which previously could account for incorrect outcomes. Los's move results in the abstracting of the senses in the passage of Page 54 which is repeated in both *The Book of Urizen* and *Milton*, and the clothing of the Body of Man in Luvah's Robes of Blood.

Like the abstracted mind, Luvah's Robe of blood is not of the free flowing blood in the veins of the living as at the end of *Milton*, but the conglobed blood of the vision of the abstraction of Eternal Death, seen at the end of Night I. Thus, the double female form's plea to the Council of God:

Saviour If thou hadst been here our brother had not died⁴⁵

does not induce pity or action, but "All Eden was darkened"⁴⁶. And, when the Saviour bends over Albion on the rocks of time and space, his words "If ye will Believe you Brother shall rise again"⁴⁷ are not followed by the revival from the dead man as with Lazarus, for this is the Saviour of Snowdon who looks forward to Ulro and Eternal death. Therefore this Saviour's words lead to a furious puppeteering of the corpse by Urizen, Los and Enitharmon. These scientists have forgotten^{*} faith in the Saviour who has already saved them, and do not accept the life he gives.

Notes:

1 - FZ Page 23, line 3 (12 R, line 3).

2 - Ibid. line 6.

3 - E 501.

4 - FZ Page 24, ll. 7 and 4 (12V ll. 7 and 4).

5 - FZ Page 25, ll. 42-43 (13R, ll. 12-13).

6 - FZ Page 24, ll. 5-7 (12V, ll. 5-7).

7 - David Hume, *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Edinburgh, 1748), Section x. We know Blake had read some of Hume's works as he criticizes them in *Milton*.

8 - FZ Page 34, ll. 1-2, 5-9 (17V ll. 1-6).

9 - A careful study of the antipenultimate of the original lines of FZ Page 34 shows that the words "livd Los" have been added over the erased word "Urizen" whose curlicued downstroke of the "U", and long tail of the "Z" are clearly visible. Thus, the last three lines of this page would have read:

Thus Urizen driving Enion far into the ? infinite
Ah happy blindness she sees not the terrors of the uncertain
And oft she wails from the dark deep

10 - Ulro itself only occurs in Night 2 in added lines.

11 - FZ Page 23, line 4.

12 - FZ Page 24, line 8. The "Mundane Egg" is a Neoplatonic term. To call it a "Mundane Shell" seems to be the height of irony, as instead of being a source of life, it is built around Albion as the created unindigent first principle.

- 13 - CWP, III, p17.
- 14 - FZ Page 24, line 8.
- 15 - FZ Page 25, ll. 6-8.
- 16 - Ibid. ll. 13-16, 25-26
- 17 - Ibid. line 38-39.
- 18 - FZ Page 28, ll. 1-2.
- 19 - Ibid. ll. 11-23.
- 20 - FZ Page 30, ll. 15-19.
- 21 - Ibid. ll. 23-25 and 43-46.
- 22 - Ibid. line 48.
- 23 - Ibid. ll. 50-51, FZ Page 32, ll. 5-6
- 24 - FZ Page 33, ll. 34-36. It might also be relevant here to mention that Taylor's CWP has a frontispiece diagram of all these mathematical figures.
- 25 - FZ Page 34, ll. 37-40.
- 26 - Ibid. ll. 56-65.
- 27 - Ibid. ll. 90-91.
- 28 - In the rewritten line 97 of FZ Page 34, discussed in note 6 above.
- 29 - E 954.
- 30 - Particularly those of FZ Pages 38, 39, 40 & 41.
- 31 - *The Four Zoas by William Blake A Photographic Facsimile of the Manuscript with commentary on the Illustrations*, Cettina Magno and David V. Erdman, (London and Toronto: Toronto University, 1987), p.48.
- 32 - Ibid.
- 33 - FZ Page 39, ll. 2-3 & 12-14.
- 34 - In terms of the history of Christianity, we could say we have reached the fifth century when heresies began to be eradicated by more and more violent means.

- 35 - See E 327 FZ Page 40, line 5
- 36 - FZ Page 42, ll. 19-20.
- 37 - FZ Page 46, line 9.
- 38 - See E 330, FZ Pages 44-46.
- 39 - FZ Page 47, ll. 12-22.
- 40 - FZ Page 48, ll. 4, 5, 6 & 8.
- 41 - This refusal of Los seems to suggest the uptake of reason by religion in Deism which marked the vast confidence in reason of the post Newtonian era which was not shared by Blake.
- 42 - FZ Page 51, ll. 12-15.
- 43 - Ibid. line 19.
- 44 - These quotes are from the end of FZ Page 53 and the beginning of FZ Page 54.
- 45 - FZ Page 56, line 1.
- 46 - Ibid. line 12.
- 47 - Ibid. line 18.

Chapter 9 - The Problem of Marriage

The end of the Night IV left Urizen and Los madly trying to animate Albion as they themselves began to stiffen "like lead" and bend into "unusual forms". This is the necessary outcome of Los's forging the links of Fate, for the fixing of the logic of cause and effect to manufacture certainty fixes the fixers in the same fatalistic web of destiny. Thus Enitharmon too is fixed and winter sets in to freeze the immortals, who:

linked in a marriage chain
Began a dismal dance¹

This is the first time Blake has used the term *Marriage* to describe the relationship of the immortals and their emanations, and it would seem to be too much of a coincidence that he employed this term here by chance. Following the argument of Chapter Two, the forging of the links of Fate by Los is akin to the Marriage of human kind to a fixed system of causes and effects to produce the eradication of evil or incorrect results by forcing the connection of things to a single system of possible results. Thus Blake's use of the term can be seen to criticize the immortals in the same way he criticized Swedenborg in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

To simply close off the possibility of a whole series of possible outcomes in order to gain purity or truthfulness has already been criticized by Tharmas in Night IV:

Deformd I see the lineaments of ungratified Desire
The all powerful curse of an honest man upon Urizen and Luvah²

for his approach to impurity is to eradicate it stage by stage in the Neoplatonic cycle. Thus, as this deformation brought down Urizen after he had excluded Ahania, so the attempt at reviving Urizen and Luvah grows into a challenge to the power of Los and Enitharmon with the birth of Orc. Immediately the child is born it cries:

Luvah King of Love thou art the King of rage & death³

This encapsulates the problem of Marriage, for Orc, born of Enitharmon is the manifestation of those desires which must remain ungratified because they are not permitted by the system, but which are on *the same level of generation* as Urizenic purity. If a system excludes in order to produce only Love, that rage & death which it excludes gains in power proportionately to the power of its repression. So the Demons round red Orc sing:

Shew thy soul Vaia shew thy bow & quiver of secret fires
Draw thy bow Vaia from the depths of hell thy black bow draw
And twang thy bowstring to our howlings let thine arrows black
Sing in the Sky as once they sang upon the hills of Light⁴

Bloom and Erdman⁵ suggest that the black bow is a reference to cannon or muskets, placing Vaia as goddess of self-destructive warfare. That she is the veil of appearance behind which reality can only be guessed at or imposed by systems of belief or rationality, would certainly make her the reason for going to war like Helen of Sparta but there is no reason why this should make her a war goddess in the sense of Mars who delights in war for its own sake. Rather, in the quote above the black bow fired from hell with its quiver of "secret fires" which is called out by Orc's demons, seems to be posed in opposition to the bow fired on

the "hills of Light" by Los for the sake of the Urizenic code. Thus, rather than Blake suggesting that there could be a war that was not self-destructive, the existence of a quiver of secret fires seems to suggest that Vala is not all good, but made up of a balance of good and evil drives.

At the beginning of Night IV Bloom suggests that the designation of Tharmas as the Id, Orc as the libido, Los/Urthona as the Ego and Urizen as the superego "seems worth making"⁶. But to try to remap on the Freudian psychoanalytic machinery in the same way at this point in Night V would have a critical effect upon it. For to bring it in at the earlier point as Bloom does, cannot account for this duality of Vala and the whole thrust of his argument loses its cogency but for the claim that Tharmas and Los are insane⁷. Following our present reading, we can see that it was the imposition of the superego itself as Urizen's self-castration in order to produce a fixed series of responses which led to the birth of Orc as uncontrolled libido. Thus Urizen's increase in power also increased the power of the arrows in the secret quiver of Vala and caused them to be fired.

Such a designation would ally Blake to the Anti-Oedipal position of Deleuze and Guattari⁸, whose fragmentation of the Oedipal triangulation is similar to Blake's questioning of the project of enforced purification in the person of Orc. For we can see that it would be too easy to read Freud's male sexual jealousy into Los the father being strangled by the girdle which spontaneously grows about him after the birth of Orc, and therefore to understand the chaining of Orc to the rock as the son's oedipal moment: the subjugation of his libido. Because it is also possible to read the same passage simply as passion held in check being reborn as rebellion against the force that tries to delimit expression⁹.

What we can say about Orc without imposing systems is that he has a different perception of the universe from Los and Urizen. In the mock revelation of the Neoplatonic Saviour failing to wake up Albion:

— first he (the Saviour) found the Limit of Opacity & nam'd it Satan
In Albions bosom for in every human bosom these limits stand
And next he found the Limit of Contraction & nam'd it Adam
While yet those beings were not born nor knew of good or Evil —
— Limit
Was put to Eternal Death Los felt the Limit & saw
The Finger of God touch the Seventh furnace in terror
And Los saw beheld the hand of God over his furnaces
Beneath the Deeps in diemal Darkness beneath immensity¹⁰

This Los/Urizenic view of the universe is perception through the functioning of the stable universals of Ulro, which are prior to time and await full understanding when God touches the seventh furnace - the seventh level of purification or generation. It is a perception which functions through the opposition of good and evil, where Satan is opaque because he is error, and Adam is the limit of contraction for there can be no finer detailed understanding than Adam's in Eden. It is significant for the present reading however, that although Albion does not revive at the touch of this saviour, "the Starry Wheels felt the divine hand"¹¹.

Against this, Orc's universe, viewed through "ten thousand spirits of life" which feed his chained down body, has no limits to its contraction and expansion:

His eyes the lights of his large soul contract or else expand
Contracted they behold the secrets of the infinite mountains
The veins of gold & silver & the hidden things of Vala
Whatever grows from its pure bud or breathes a fragrant soul

Expanded they behold the terrors of the Sun & Moon
The Elemental Planets & the orbs of eccentric fire¹²

In Orc's cosmology there are no preset limits to perception or stable universals to guide it, everything is open to be perceived as there is no opacity or error. For his body, nailed down by Los, is not free to enjoy these perceptions and

His loins inwove with alken fires are like a fiery furnace¹³

as his unlimited perception is the *result* of its being chained down. This imposition of physical inactivity upon him by Los in the generation above him has allowed his mind complete freedom. Thus we can see Blake's dramatization of the attempt to purify the mind into understanding stable universals by limiting the scope of the body: one generation ties down the body, but in freeing the mind in this way to visions of the "real", the next generation burns with desires unthought of by those who tied it down. Again we can see that the system is beset by the problem that the phenomenal can never coexist with what is thought to be a stable "real"¹⁴.

And it is for this reason that Los and Enitharmon journey back to the mountain on which Orc is chained down, to find that "the young limbs had stricken root"¹⁵. They wanted the freedom of his mind to see things the way they thought would be "once and for all", in the Contraction of Adam, and to the limit of opacity of Satan, and did not know that it would also free him to see things without any limit at all. Thus they leave him on the mountain, the hoped for resolution of the problem still out of their reach. The black and white arrows of Vala's quiver are now known to them and "within [Enitharmon's] heart Vala began to reanimate"¹⁶, for clarity is deferred as before.

Now for the first time since his fall, Urizen speaks, but his lament is preceded by a single line:

The Woes of Urizen shut up in the deep dens of Urthona¹⁷

This seems to act as a title, separating it off from the rest of the action almost as a commentary on what has just happened. Again, Erdman suggests that this lament is connected with insanity, this time drawing a parallel with the insanity of George III and the horrors of his kingdom¹⁸, but this seems a strange metaphor to draw out from the work of a republican like Blake who would not easily follow the paternalist model of king to country.

Bloom on the other hand draws a parallel to Milton's Satan lamenting on Mount Niphates in *Paradise Lost* Book IV, suggesting that Urizen's sorrow "demonstrates the inadequacy of the enlightened intellect when struggling to overcome the difficulties of a fallen nature."¹⁹ But his argument ends up with the idea that the last line of the lament is ironic, in that Urizen must protect his kind of thought from a love he now considers hellish, as he is fallen. However, this line:

When thought is cload in Caves. Then love shall shew its root in deepest

Hell²⁰

contains the Platonic philosophers' resolve from the Republic, which is to purify the mind from the lowest state of unenlightenment in order to gain the state of purity through the ministrations of love by coming out of the cave into the light of the day which nourishes the tree whose roots push in through the cave wall - as the sign that the tree exists²¹. Furthermore, the beginning of Night VI sees Urizen

taking up his spear and exploring his dens, which seems to suggest his undertaking of this further purification after the failure of his initial building.

Thus we might suggest a different reference to *Paradise Lost* Book VI, where the Son throws Satan's hosts out of heaven:

The overthrown He rais'd, and as a herd
Of goats or timorous flock together throng'd.
Drove them before him thunder struck, pursued
With terrors and with furies to the bounds
And crystal wall of Heaven, which opening wide
Rolled inward, and a spacious gap disclosed
Into a wasteful deep: the monstrous sight
Struck them with horror backward; but far worse
Urg'd them behind: headlong themselves they threw
Down from the verge of heaven, eternal wrath
Burn'd after them to the bottomless pit²²

This is not the work of a God of love and forgiveness, but the putting off of Evil in the delimiting of the truth of heaven²³. In it we can see elements of Blake's iconography of Ulro perception in Milton's heaven. It is stable, it is limited, that which is within Heaven is crystal clear, that which is not is excluded in an infinite abyss.

The section quoted above follows on immediately from the section quoted in Chapter 7, from which we argued that Milton's Saviour is understood in *The Four Zoas* as Johannine: the Saviour of Ezekiel's Wheels rather than the Saviour who has already saved, the Saviour who cannot revive Albion for he is a construct of Ulro. Thus, we may read Urizen's lament under its heading, as a result of the events which have occurred in the Spectre of Urthona's world - Ulro -

since his fall. For he has caused the birth of Orc, and must now do the further work of purification which he had thought to avoid by casting out Ahania. This work will take the form of empirical study to find out what is crystal clear and thus heavenly, and what is opaque and therefore of Hell. Only by remapping the contraction of Adam to exclude the opacity of Satan can he follow the root of Love out of the Cave of deluded thought and delimit Ulro's heaven properly.

And thus Night VI begins with Urizen exploring Urthona's dens rather than building a palace in the sky²⁴. But immediately he is beset by a different paradox, the paradox of all encyclopaedic empirical studies. For Urizen straight away meets three women who have their names written on their foreheads, and who resist his approach and will not speak to him until:

They gave a scream: they knew their father Urizen knew his daughters²⁵

For from its very start an empirical approach can but produce subjective names given to that which is perceived, and without the consensus of some sort of universal, either of time or between perceivers that made up the rational approach, is solipsism. For example, Locke's mind as *tabula rasa* may be filled only with empirical observations, but as Hume pointed out, one cause cannot be said to lead certainly and always to a particular effect from the logic of constant conjunction. That every swan I see is white does not mean that the next swan I see will necessarily be so. The universal cannot be inducted from observation however great the sample. In the poem, Urizen sees things he thinks he does not know and must give new names to, but when he examines them more closely, realizes that he has encountered them before although he does not recognize them.

Thus Urizen starts to tie down the mind to produce consensus just as Los and Enitharmon did to Orc. Rather than build rooms for his daughters in his palace, in which, like the prefabricated Beulah of Ulro, all dreams may be accounted for, Urizen says he:

...will reverse
The precious benediction for their colours of loveliness
I will give blackness for jewels hoary frost for ornament deformity
For crowns wreathed serpents for sweet odors stinking corruptibility
For voices of delight hoarse croakings inarticulate thro' frost
For labour fatherly care & sweet instruction
I will give Chains of dark ignorance & cords of twisted self conceit
And whips of stern repentance & food of stubborn obstinacy
That they may curse Tharmas their God & Los his adopted son²⁶

We can see now that this is not because Tharmas is the "god of their chaos" as Bloom suggests²⁷, but that Tharmas as the instigator of the Neoplatonist process is attempting to reach purity through evolutionary changes, whereas Urizen is trying to impose it in a single gesture. Thus Urizen imposes a new order upon his daughters which closely resembles Puritanism in its choice of colours and its inverting of the usual designations of what is beautiful and what is wisdom. In this way the bodies of his daughters are tied down like Orc by the requirements of the new system, and the movement of Tharmas' evolution frozen.

...to solid were his waves
Silent in ridges he beheld them stand around Urizen
A dreary waste of solid waters for the King of Light²⁸

So there is no suicide pact suggested to Urizen in Tharmas' next speech²⁹. Rather Tharmas asks:

Art thou like me risen again from death or art thou deathless
If thou art he my desperate purpose hear & give me death
For death is better far than life death is my desire
That I in vain in various paths have sought³⁰

because the death he seeks is the certainty of having gained purity as the goal of his cycle of purifications. Thus Tharmas asks Urizen if he is risen again from death, meaning is he another of the Neoplatonic cycle of births and deaths. And this request is made against the chance that Urizen might be "deathless", meaning that he is pure and his spirit no longer needs to "die" again in matter. If Urizen is indeed pure, Tharmas asks for death again because he himself is still not pure for he is not reunited with Enion.

Furthermore, Tharmas makes this call for death as a demand upon Urizen with the threat:

Withhold from me thy light for ever & I will withhold
From thee thy food³¹

because in the Neoplatonic cycle, purity exists only from the "food" of deaths of the spirit in matter. But Urizen does not answer as he does not recognize himself as the third level of generation of Tharmas' original cycle. Thus he struggles on alone in the abyss to map out Ulro, among the dragons given life by the unfulfilled prophecies of Los. Here, the spirits he meets:

—wander Moping in their heart a Sun a Dreary moon
A Universe of fiery constellations in their brain
An Earth of wintry woe beneath their feet & round their loins ...
...So in the regions of the grave none knows his dark compeer³²

for within his empiricism they too are solipsistic. In this world, the only consensus is imposed externally "where multitudes were shut/ Up in the solid mountains" or where in "fiery cities & castles ... the forms of tygers and lions dishumanizd men". And even he cannot be understood by them as:

His voice was to them but an Inarticulate thunder for their Ears
Were heavy and dull³³

Thus Urizen gives up this approach, deemed to be from the South, and approaches Ulro from the East. This he enters and:

...turning round he threw
Himself into the dismal void: falling he fell & fell
Whirling in unresistable revolutions down & down³⁴

Here, reference to the section from *Paradise Lost* quoted above in this chapter suggests that being unable to map the clarity of the crystal walls of Ulro/heaven because of the problem of solipsism, Urizen enters "the bottomless pit" into which the Son has driven the demons, for the purpose of finding out what is bad, in order to gain knowledge in reverse. Thus Urizen writes the books of "Thou shalt nots" in iron; brass and gold :

Of he would sit in a dark rift and regulate his books³⁵

and in so doing:

...fixing many a Science in the deep
And thence throwing his venturous limbs into the Vast unknown
Swift Swift from Chaos to chaos from void to void a road Immense³⁶

This is the world of speculative sciences which progress in Newtonian fashion from hypothesis to hypothesis, to build up a "road" of certain truth. But Blake points out that the "road" only leads from chaos to chaos, and void to void. Thus still Urizen laments:

Can I not leave this world of Cumbrous wheels
Circle oer Circle nor on high attain a void
Where self sustaining I may view all things beneath my feet³⁷

For the sciences are now beset with the problem of reference. They still exist only on the level of Ezekiel's wheels, and cannot reach the living creatures they have excluded. Nor can they become self-justifying, for although they can fix a stable place within their method, they must function from axioms which are unverifiable once and for all³⁸. Thus Urizen fails in this way as well:

sinking through these Elemental wonders swift to fall
I thought perhaps to find an End a world beneath this voidness³⁹

He is still unable to ground his method in certainty. And thus he makes his arbitrary decision to build his truth of himself, of his own solipsism:

—brooding over me the Enormous worlds
Reorganizing me shooting forth in bones & flesh & blood
I am regenerate to fall or rise at will or to remain
A labourer of ages a dire discontent a living woe
Wandering in vain. Here will I fix my foot & here rebuild
Here mountains of Brass promise much riches in their dreadful bosoms⁴⁰

The uncertainty of science must flesh out its theories in the directions chosen by the scientists, or science becomes an endless task, thus Urizen takes a lesson from the logic of science and builds where he arbitrates.

Thus the building begins again, although this time freezing Urizen himself and the world he entraps under the web made of himself. Only by fixing everyone of his perceptions from an arbitrary zero point can things become certain for Urizenic science. But instead of being able to complete his project, Urizen is lead by "Providence divine" once again to the world of Urthona's Spectre. Just as in Night III, where Urizen was also close to completing the Neoplatonic cycle of purification, the Spectre of the original goal of the cycle set in motion by Tharmas, "lest Death eternal should be the result"⁴¹.

Eternal death would be the Neoplatonic revelation, the prophesied time to come when all words would be once and for all overlaid upon their references. But it is called Eternal death by Blake for it is Ulro, a constructed place of illusory salvation, as it is the unindigent of Thomas Taylor.

Thus Urthona comes out to greet the approach of Urizen, sending out heralds and beasts of the apocalypse. But Urizen holds back from consummation as his centrality in his net makes him seem a god over his world. And his comets perform so well to his expectation that it seems as though he has no need for apocalypse:

...In vast Excentric paths
Compulsive rolled the Comets at his dread command the dreary way
Falling with wheel impetuous down among Urthonas vales
And round red Orc returning back to Urizen gorged with blood⁴²

The reference to comets suggests Halley, the friend of Newton who discovered that Comets do follow periodic pathways and are not random events as was first

thought. To be able to account for such eccentricities would give Newtonian science greater force of argument, and consequently strengthen the Deist case.

But this rise of Reason ending Night VI, however powerful, does not seem to give motivation for the Spectre of Urthona and Tharmas to flee in the first line of Night VIIa. Thus we must look carefully at the double Night VII for an answer.

Notes:

1 - FZ Page 58, line 14-15.

2 - FZ Page 48, ll. 1-2.

3 - FZ Page 58, line 23.

4 - FZ Page 59, ll. 4-8.

5 - Bloom, in E 956. Erdman in PAE 390-1.

6 - E 955.

7 - The designation fits Bloom's purpose only at the end of Night IV when Tharmas calls upon Los to renew the Universe of Death and Decay, and Los refuses.

8 - See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti Oedipus - Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. by R.Hurley, M.Seem and H.R.Lane (London: Athlone, 1977).

9 - See E 340-1, FZ Pages 59-60.

10 - FZ Page 54, ll. 19-28.

11 - Ibid. line 23.

12 - FZ Page 61, ll. 18-24.

13 - FZ Page 62, line 1.

14 - This seems to follow Wittgenstein's paradox of the limit, for wherever a limit is set, its outside is also set up in the same gesture.

15 - FZ Page 62, line 22.

16 - FZ Page 63, line 13.

17 - FZ Page 63, line 23.

18 - PAE, p.343-44.

19 - E 957.

20 - FZ Page 65, line 12.

21 - Compare here Plato's views on love in the *Symposium*, where love between

philosophers is the link through which maieutics functions in generation - older man to younger man, lover to beloved. Here, Blake's use of the image of tree and root is important as he is writing of the first philosopher, the philosopher in whom maieutics must spontaneously begin for some reason - his seeing the root.

22 - John Milton *Paradise Lost* Book VI, lines 855 - 866.

23 - We might also suggest that the image appears to be repeated by Blake, although in reverse at the end of Night I, when after their quarrel, Urizen and Luvah fall with their armies "all together into an unknown Space". See Chapter 7.

24 - It is very difficult to avoid making the suggestion that the Palace of Urizen is the philosophical tradition of Rationalism and the Books written after Urizen's journey through the dens of Urthona, Empiricism.

25 - FZ Page 68, line 2

26 - FZ Page 68, ll. 16-24.

27 - E 957.

28 - FZ Page 68/9.

29 - As Bloom suggests in E 957.

30 - FZ Page 69, ll. 7-10.

31 - FZ Page 69, ll. 15-16.

32 - FZ Page 69, ll. 8-10, 15.

33 - FZ Page 70, ll. 39-40.

34 - FZ Page 71, ll. 19-21.

35 - FZ Page 72, line 6.

36 - Ibid. ll. 13-15.

37 - Ibid. ll. 22-24.

38 - At this point we may recall the progress of logical positivism in this century, from the certainty of Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* to the claim of Isaiah Berlin that it is not possible to ask a weighing machine to weigh itself:

thus showing that the supposed deductive certainties could not account for themselves.

39 - FZ Page 72, line 25-26.

40 - FZ Page 73, ll. 10-15.

41 - FZ Page 74, line 33.

42 - FZ Page 76, ll. 28-31.

Chapter 10 - The Nights VII

The "addition" to Night VII in the form of an entire second section might be seen to allow us to return to the type of reading we gave for Nights I and II although at a much lower level of complexity. But the difficulty with reading a simple interplaying of old upon new here is that whereas the additions to Nights I and II were made as marginals, a way that opened itself to our reading the effect of what must be later thought upon what was earlier, an uncertainty has arisen from Blake's having left two title pages extant.

This uncertainty as to Blake's intentions has led to the Night being read as two separate and independent sections from the earliest editions of Blake's poetry. Only in the second edition of Erdman's *Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, after an edition of *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*¹ on the subject, is an attempt at combining the sections into one whole Night published. This is because there has been confusion as to which of the sections was written first, and because there was no deletion of either part.

For example, Keynes and Ostriker both agree upon printing the Nights separately, and both agree on following the directions Blake wrote on Night VIIb, that this section should be printed in a transposed form, beginning at Page 95:15 - Page 98, followed by Page 91:1 - Page 95:14². However, they do not agree as to the order of composition, Keynes writes:

Probably the one here printed first [Night VIIa] was written first.³

and Ostriker:

[a] was written later than [b] and may have been intended to replace it.⁴

In support of keeping the Nights separate is Margoliouth, who agrees with Ostriker's assumption that Night VIIb⁵ is the earlier of the two. But in his reworking of the Blake text, he points out that VIIb follows on from VIIa if VIIb remains in its untransposed form. However, if we follow his argument that Night IX follows from VIIb if it is taken to start in its original place (Page 119, line 24), the question is begged as to why Blake did not renumber the earlier night, or at least make some sort of indication of his intentions at some level of the text when he added the later Night VIIa.⁶

Margoliouth does make another important point, that if Blake wrote on the Edward and Elinor proofs⁷ because he had run out of *Night Thoughts* proofs, then this addition is later than the rest of the poem. This would suggest that Blake worked on this part of the poem last of all, attempting to fit Night VII (or the Nights VII) into the new work he added in Night VIII, which is universally accepted to be the latest written of all the Nights.

Erdman⁸ also thinks Night VIIb is earlier than Night VIIa because of the nature of the rough fit of VIIa into VIIb untransposed, but he conjectures that when Night VIIb is transposed, the fit is better. However, he goes on to suggest that the even later addition of the Edward and Elinor pieces, as well as the additions to Page 85 and 86⁹, disrupt a simple joining of the two sections, claiming that the new end of VIIa runs smoothly into Night VIII. Thus, he accepts and prints suggestions made by Mark Lefebvre¹⁰ that the Night should be printed as a single whole, with Night VIIa up to Page 85:22 followed by the transposed Night VIIb, rounded off by the latest additions to Night VIIa, i.e. Page 85:23 to Page 90.

In complete disagreement with Erdman is Andrew Lincoln¹¹, who suggests that the appearance of later material in Night VIIb, such as Satan and the "Promise Divine" for which the Daughters of Beulah wait patiently¹².

alone suggests that VIIb is later than VIIa¹³ but there is also the fact that VIIb has stronger narrative links with VIIa1 than with VI. The growth of the tree of Mystery, Orc climbing the tree, and Vala's birth are all described in VIIa1, and yet all are assumed in VIIb, and the original beginning of VIIb (on Page 91 before the narrative was rearranged) seems to follow from the end of VIIa1¹⁴

With evidence of these narrative links, Lincoln suggests an alternative reading of the night as a single whole, beginning with the transposed second part of VIIb (Pages 95:15 - 98), followed by the whole of VIIa, including the added pieces on Pages 85-90, ending up with the transposed first half of VIIb (Pages 91:1 - 95:14).

The present reading would agree with this arrangement of the night, noting as it does that references to St. John's Revelation and to the resurrection of Lazarus of VIIb are later ideas than the atonement of Urizen and the bringing him under the sway of Los in VIIa, which follows the prophetic religion of the Lambeth books. However, this agreement comes with a caveat, for it would seem dangerous to base any strong arguments of fit on questions as to which version of Night VII was written first because either one could have been copied out and changed to a greater or lesser extent from earlier notes. Therefore, we shall rely more strongly on the evidence of the additions to VIIa and the instructions for the transposition of VIIb to come to the same conclusions as Lincoln as to the arrangement of the night rather than from arguments of fit. This method of reading the Night has been chosen in favour of that of other readers, for they have made their decisions on how to read Night VII from grounds of fit of the sections with respect to the overall plan which they felt made up the narrative flow of *The Four Zoas*, rather than from the minute particulars of evidence within the two sections of Night VII, which latter method seems to be more coherent with Blake's own thought on wholes and parts.

Working from the logic that a marginal addition is later than text in ordinary spaced lines, we must take it for granted that Blake's squeezing of the words "Beginning of the Book Seventh Night" between lines 14 and 15 on Page 95 is later than the rest of the text of VIIb. Thus, following Blake's line numbering, we can date it as contemporaneous with the added line beneath the title of VIIb: "This Night begins at line 153 the following comes at the end", and the instruction at the end of Page 98 "Then follows Thus in the caverns of the grave &c as it stands now in the beginning of Night the Seventh." On their own, these instructions do not lead further than the rearrangement of VIIb, and cannot alone support Lincoln's suggestion that VIIa should be included between the halves without his argument from fit¹⁵ and the tenuous suggestion¹⁶ that VIIa without its additions after Page 85 is later than VIIb. But there is a further addition to Page 98, made in pencil above the direction to go back to the start, which reads:

Then I heard the Earthquake &c

according to Keynes and Ostriker, and:

Then Heavd the Earthquake &c

according to Erdman.

This is one of the pencil additions to the text of *The Four Zoas* which are quite rare. They generally take the form of single word or line additions with a few exceptions¹⁷. That most of the pencil alterations are late is consonant with the alterations made in pencil on the title page, particularly because the alterations on Page 41 take the form of several deletions of the words "Fallen Man" and addition of the name "Albion". Following from our earlier arguments about Blake's position

vis à vis Plato and Taylor it is also interesting to note that the pencil alteration on Page 24 is the line "Build we the Mundane Shell around the Rock of Albion". Also, the pencil additions to Pages 25 and 32 are both lines concerning Ulro.

This pattern of slight¹⁸ pencil additions, made in a rather florid but similar hand, following the renaming of the poem also in pencil, suggests a rereading of *The Four Zoas* at a single sitting at which Blake made minor alterations to the whole poem. The nature of these alterations, in particular the addition of the words "Mundane Shell" and "Ulro", would further suggest that this rewriting was done after he had worked on *Milton* at least, and possibly *Jerusalem* as well, where the terms are used more frequently.

For this admittedly conjectural reason, we would therefore be wary of the suggestion by both Keynes¹⁹ and Erdman²⁰ that the pencil addition to Page 98 refers to a lost passage. If Blake was merely making single line and word alterations it would seem unlikely that he would embark on writing a new section for the poem which was subsequently lost, and therefore we might look elsewhere for references to the earthquake.

In his notes, Erdman points to Page 104 line 21 where the words "heavd" and "earthquake" appear in the same line but takes the reference no further. We must agree with him in this as this line of Night VIII does not seem to lead towards any clarification. But, immediately below the pencil addition on Page 98 in the transposed and separated VIIb, Orc is compared to an earthquake:

As when an Earthquake rouses from his den, his shoulders huge
Appear above the crumbling Mountain²¹

However this passage continues "Silence waits around him/ A moment", which would not logically follow if Keynes and Ostriker's reading of the pencil addition

were correct. But even if Erdman were correct in his reading, it would seem odd that Blake would put in a passage about the earthquake heaving followed immediately by another passage about Orc as an earthquake.

There is a second reference to earthquakes in VIIb, on Page 94, line 32, where Vala, in rage at Tharmas accusing her sins of causing the curse upon them all, stamps the hills "like and Earthquake rumbling in the bowels of the earth". This reference cannot be attached directly to the pencil addition by any other than spurious means. Nevertheless, this second reference to earthquake does relate to Orc, as did the first, although in a more subtle way.

In the speech for which Tharmas curses her, Vala pines her loss of Luvah for:

Enlitharmon & Ahenia combined with Enion
Hid him in that Outrageous form of Orc which torments me for sin
For all my secret faults which he brings forth upon the light
Of day²²

Thus, after Tharmas' curse that she has mocked him with "false hope" because of her sin, she returns:

... swift as a blight on an infant bud
Howling in all the notes of woe²³

which is to say, she, as the veil of perception, always returns covering everything perceived, for the veil of perception is the impenetrability of solipsism. Thus she is also "all the notes of woe", as her return is to every viewpoint, and thus a refusal to give Tharmas the unified clarity he desires.

In placing Vala in an economy of return, Blake has shown her functioning as that of the Greek Mnemosyne, which is the Augustinian functioning of imagination we discussed in Chapter 5 above. Thus, in her return, Vala's notes of woe are:

Stamping the hills, wading or swimming, flying furious or falling,
Or like an Earthquake rumbling in the bowels of the earth
Or like a cloud beneath, & like a fire flaming in high
Walking in pleasure of the hills or murmuring in the dales
Like to a rushing torrent beneath & a falling rock above.
A thunder cloud in the south & a lulling voice heard in the north 24

And this is a resumé of the perceptions of all the immortals, hidden behind her veil. Enitharmon's rioting is described as on hills covered by clouds, Urizen as a fire on high, Urthona as thunder, Tharmas as winds and water. Thus following this logic, we may conjecture with a degree of certainty that the word "earthquake" refers to Orc in the pencil addition to Page 98.

If this is the case, we can readily join the end of the transposed first half on VIIb onto the beginning of VIIa by replacing the three stresses "Then Urizen rose" with "Then Heavd the Earthquake" or "Then I heard the Earthquake". And finally we have a cause for the Spectre of Urthona and Tharmas to flee, while Urizen silently and unafraid descends into Orc's cave, as Orc is of his own generation.

This placing of VIIa will prevent there being two passages about Orc as earthquake side by side, while the placing of the pencil addition above the instructions for transposing VIIb on Page 98 will allow for the remainder of VIIb to come after VIIa. If we now follow the arguments from fit, we will see that these conjectures on the pencil addition are given weight by our present reading of the poem as a whole.

Beginning at Page 95:15, we find Urizen both still at the Roots of Mystery, where we left him at the end of Night V, and ready to announce the end of Prophetic time, because of the work he has done in Night VI to build the net which supplies him with Urthona's blood, although he has not gained Urthona's world²⁵. Thus, Urizen sets up the materialist religion of 'Trades & Commerce'²⁶, founds his temple of the heart and disguises 'secret lust'²⁷ as acquisitiveness by 'reversing all the order of delight'²⁸. Also, by worshipping as the sun goes down, Urizen makes the claim that this is the reason that the sun goes down, and thereby puts:

...the Sun

Into the temple of Urizen to give light to the Abyss²⁹

Reacting to this usurpation of Prophetic time, Tharmas mocks Urizen's self illuminated world. The father of the purification cycle offers 'all the ends of heaven'³⁰ to his son Los, as the words of St. John's Revelation³¹ and Milton's Paradise Lost³² echo around them and in all Tharmas says.

But as we saw at the beginning of Night V both Urizen's materialist religion and the spiritual approach of Tharmas and Los require that a form be given to that which each system deems to be evil in order that Man can be Married to good, and evil cast out. As such, materialism and spiritualism combine to the same end, as at the end of Night IV when they tried together to animate Albion directly, this time taking the form of the Prester Serpent who claims to know what sin is because:

This cowl upon my head he [God] placed in times Everlasting³³

and who calls for sin to be stored up that he may bear the burden of them in times to come.

There is a general agreement between readers that the Prester Serpent is a reference to Prester John, the legendary Priest King of the 12th century who fought in the crusades, and there is also consensus on its role as evil. Ostriker points out that the serpent's cowl is a cobra's head³⁴, and Damon emphasises the evil of the role it plays in exhorting the warriors to commit the horrors of war³⁵. Bloom sees it as:

a good representative of the Urizenic Archpriest who inculcates the seven deadly virtues that are the "seven Diseases of Man" ³⁶

which therefore assists in constituting the web of Urizen as a veil of delusion which is any religiously apprehended reality. Nevertheless, none comment upon his being a serpent.

In *The Four Zoas* there are four serpents, the first being Urthona after his spectre has fled to Enion in Night I, the second, the Prester Serpent, the third the form of Orc as he climbs the tree of mystery, and the fourth the part of Urizen left after he stabilizes out his stony form in Night VIII. Considering the case of Orc, we see that his transformation into a serpent is part of the Eternal Death of Urizen, which is to say part of the abstraction from life which is the purifying of Ezekiel's Wheels of the Living Creatures. Of Orc we read:

No more remained of Orc but the Serpent round the tree of Mystery
The form of Orc was gone he reard his serpent bulk among
The stars of Urizen in Power rending the form of life
Into a formless indefinite & strewing it on the abyss³⁷

Here we see that this transformation of Orc from heavy shouldered boy to serpent is accompanied by his serpent bulk moving to the stars of Urizen (which Blake depicted as eyes of the spirit on Ezekiel's Wheels), and the destroying and laying waste of his bodily or material form.

In contrast, as Urthona becomes spectral in the first of Urizen's wars we read:

Urthona stood in terror but not long his spectre fled
To Enion & his body fell. Tharmas beheld him fall
Endlong a raging serpent rolling round the holy tent
The sons of war astonished at the Glittering monster drove
Him far into the world of Tharmas into a cavern'd rock.³⁸

Here, the same separation has occurred, body from spirit, but due to the different perspective of Tharmas, the spectre of Urthona is the spirit and the serpent the body. This is the key to the role of the Prester Serpent, for as the symbol of the combination of Tharmas and Urizen, the Prester as Serpent is spirit to Urizen and body to Tharmas. It is the common term between Urizen's materialism and Tharmas' spiritualism.

The placing of the formation of Orc's serpent after the Prester Serpent, however, would seem to be illogical and argue for a reading of VIIb returned to its original order. Nevertheless, this goes against Blake's written intentions for VIIb. Also, the pencil note on Page 98, leading us on to VIIa gains a great deal from this ordering, as VIIa describes the necessary steps which lead to Orc's reptilization, namely the conflict between Urizen and Orc, the inculcating of Los in the tree of Mystery at the shadow of Enitharmon's uniting with the Spectre of Urthona, and the two unsuccessful attempts at the building of the false earthly paradise promised as Ulro, the paradise of ideals. For, after Urizen's failure to bring about

Ulro in the writing of the book of "Thou shalt nots" in Night VI, it follows that only when everything good has been abstracted can evil also be abstracted - as Orc's serpent, for then it becomes a ghost in its own absolute exclusion.

With the beginning of Villa changed by the addition of "Then Heavd the earthquake" as a reference to Orc, it does not seem strange for Tharmas as spiritual systematization to flee from confronting Orc in his Caves, while Urizen, as scientific research descends fearlessly into the other world of evil which his systematization³⁹ has co-formed. The whole journey of science is undertaken to find out error, while the life of the spiritual is of avoiding it. Thus, although the Prester Serpent showed a common element in the action of each method, the fact that Urizen has not yet produced his serpent from Orc separates the two approaches yet again.

Nevertheless, it is mirroring the envy Los feels because of his exclusion from the direct apprehension of evil that Urizen feels envy for Orc's passion. Thus we read that although Urizen's attempt to cool Orc's flames should produce clarity by understanding what it is and throwing it out, instead:

 beneath his heel a deadly root
 Struck thro the rock the root of Mystery accused shooting up
 Branching into the heaven of Los⁴⁰

In other words, because Urizen is envious of Orc's fiery passion he is bringing in an element of judgment over him rather than objectively observing him. And without any certain grounding for his judgement, he must make his decision for undisclosed reasons. Therefore, Urizen becomes still more like Los, whose life is

based on the existence of some future undisclosed spiritual purity, and the two become entangled in the mystery of undisclosed sources.

Realising he has become entangled in mystery, Urizen attempts to escape from it to try to address Orc again. He takes up a new position above Orc, but must leave the Book of Iron behind him entangled in the tree, as though forgetting a whole set of his own thoughts, perhaps to take them for absolute truths at some later stage⁴¹.

Urizen's next approach to Orc is to claim that he pities the pain in which Orc finds himself, though he is perturbed that Orc seems to enjoy his torture. Orc's answer is interesting for it dramatizes the paradox of systematic attempts at attaining purity or total knowledge:

I rage in the deep for Lo my feet & hands are naild to the burning rock
Yet my fierce fires are better than thy snows Shuddring thou sittest
Thou art not chained Why shouldst thou sit cold grovelling demon of
woe⁴²

For although (or perhaps because) they are bent upon purity, systems constantly face the non-systematic, looking to define themselves by reference to that which does not fit into them. For, lacking certainty in positive self-identification, which would require eternal truths, scientific and spiritual rules are based on their negatives. In the spiritual world these take the form of rules with the formulation "Thou shalt not ..." aimed at bodily pleasures, which Blake mocks from as early as *The Songs of Experience*⁴³. In scientific methodology the Newtonian method of progression is to move from "certainty" to hypothesis asymptotically towards the total disclosure of truth, which is a step into doubt followed by building up truth behind you as the journey continues towards doubt with a further imaginative step into the unknown⁴⁴. Thus systems are inhibited to exactly the same extent

as that which they tie down for the purpose of exclusion, as they must spend their time in confrontation with their negative in order that their positive is upheld. And this is because the system is always aimed at:

the wonders of Futurity⁴⁵

while at the same time is:

in horrible fear of the future⁴⁶

for the positive certainty the system gains is always in balance with its negative which may alter its constitution at any time. In spiritual matters, a situation might arise in which that which was said to be wrong could turn out right; and in science, a new set of observations might change the whole of accepted scientific fact. Also, at the time of prophetic revelation or when all is discovered by science, the systems should logically come to an end as their function is completed.

At Orc's double edged taunt, Urizen calls out his daughters, whose first task is to take the book of iron and place it above on a "cloud of death". Here, as at the end of Night I, Eternal Death is the desired outcome of Urizen (being the eternal death which is the conclusion of the functioning of the system, or revealed truth), and here, it replies to Orc as it takes the form of a step which manufactures constants out of fluxes. For, putting the book of iron above on the clouds of death is to make deductions out of inductions and is a further act of abstraction to that of the abstraction of the senses in Night IV. In this case it would be equivalent to the formation of mathematics as an eternal truth out of the mathematical inductions that numbers of perceived objects combine to produce other numbers of perceived objects in a predictable way⁴⁷. Thus Urizen tries to

avoid the problems of judging Orc in a relationship of envy or pity by creating Moral Duty out of this mathematized world, although it is his own product, a self-created deductive absolute.

His famous speech to his daughters on enforcing government through Moral Duty is also the first point to which Blake appended an addition in VIIa. This section of eight lines contains the lines:

To bring the shadow of Enitharmon beneath our wondrous tree
That Los may evaporate like smoke & be no more
Draw down Enitharmon to the Spectre of Urthona ⁴⁸

which acts as a justification for this type of rule. For, if Enitharmon, who cannot veil herself, is brought under the tree of mystery she will show what is true and absolute, and the age of prophecy will come to an end. This addition will also lead into the additions on Page 85 to Page 90, where Urizen's plot to force Ulro in this way once again fails and sets up the possibility of Los bringing about the completion of Ulro.

The threat of Urizen's enforced parousia brings about the start of the expected transformation of Orc into a serpent as he will be revealed; but as it begins to take place, Orc cries again of the paradox of Urizen's power:

Art thou the cold attractive power that holds me in chains
I well remember how I stole thy light & it became fire
Consuming ⁴⁹

for Urizen's light exists only with reference to Orc. Thus the joining of the shadow of Enitharmon to the Spectre of Urthona does not bring about Ulro in the complete form which Urizen expected, but:

Male forms without female counterparts or Emanations
Cruel and ravening with Enmity & Hatred & War
In dreams of Ulro dark delusive drawn by the lovely shadow⁵⁰

For it was not the revealed Enitharmon, but her shadow, hidden by Los in a "cold white cloud" in Night V to protect her from the flames of Orc⁵¹, which is coupling with the Spectre of Urthona, whose serpent form, which we can now see is Los, has been her divided counterpart since the addition to Night II⁵².

Thus there is absolutely no reason to suppose that this could be called the end of prophetic time by Urizen as in Erdman's reading the Night VII as a whole, not least because there are no signs on Page 85 that there should be any separation in the text at this point. But also, because Urizen's plan, stated in the addition to Page 80, has gone awry, for Urthona's Spectre does not remain with Enitharmon after the generating of yet another level of males without female counterparts, but leaves her in Charge of Orc, the Enmity, Hatred and War of these males, in fact as far from the parousia of Ulro as possible.

But this unsuccessful attempt at reaching Ulro from Urizen's self-created absolute of Moral Duty does have an unexpected effect, for the absolute imperative of morality⁵³, created by Urizen in his transcendental step of ordering his daughters to put the book of iron above the cloud of death, now allies his world of rational mystery with the religious world of Los:

Then took the tree of Mystery root in the World of Los⁵⁴

Thus we can see that the unexpected outcome of Urizen's failure to secure Ulro is to show Urthona the "double rooted labyrinth" of his and Los's destiny. For, although Urizen was in hope of Ulro when he caused Urthona's spectre to show himself to Enitharmon's shadow, the openness of Enitharmon in telling the story

of Urizen's generation from Vala and his usurpation of Beulah⁵⁵ frees the Spectre to tell her the story of his generation into Los, (his serpent form taken up by Tharmas), and Spectre, his spiritual form which was followed by Urizen through Night VI⁵⁶.

But when Urthona's Spectre claims that Ulro will be the result of their rejoining and reveals himself to Los, begging his other half like himself, to:

Unbar the gates of Memory look upon me
Not as another but as thy real Self⁵⁷

Los at first refuses to believe that he could come under the Augustinian memory structure of reason. As he is prophet he cannot believe that he has forgotten something as vital to himself as another self, and thus claims that he too can feel the approach of the parousia of Ulro:

a World within
opening its gates & in it all the real substances
Of which these in the world are shadows which pass away⁵⁸

This is Los at his most Platonic, sounding uncannily like the Socrates of the *Republic*, or Thomas Taylor attempting to equate the God of Christianity with the Good of the *Republic* and the One of the *Parmenides* as:

not only above soul and intellect, but even superior to being itself⁵⁹

Thus we can see that Los's project of revealing Ulro as a world of real substances superior to the earthly shadows of reality is Neoplatonic from the Johannine Christian point of view, and coextensive with Urizen's philosophical point of view.

Having convinced himself that the idea was originally his and not Urizen's, Los embraces Enitharmon and the Spectre of Urthona, hoping for Ulro. But again Enitharmon flees, and the "Centre open'd by Divine Mercy" comes from the combination of Los and the Spectre alone and thus Ulro is deferred yet again. Thus although they build Golgonooza, opening up the new heavens and earth promised by St. John, they still operate within the limit of Satan and Adam⁶⁰ which is good and evil understood in the Miltonic terms of opacity and clarity: in other words, there is still no definition of what is evil in what should be a perfectly good world. Urthona's Spectre can make a tenuous link with Enitharmon's shadow because both are spirit, and thus the Urthona/Los combination is able find out what is evil, although slowly. In this way the time of Christian history⁶¹ is set up with its further demand for purification before complete union between the three of them, which:

was not to be affected without Cares and Sorrows & Troubles
Of six thousand Years of self denial and of Bitter Contrition⁶²

For again in this partial Ulro, Males are formed without a counterpart, "without a concentering vision"⁶³. Thus Urthona suggests that he and Los create counterparts for the Males, and Los in his turn prophesies Ulro in the future as the Lamb of God in Luvah's robes of blood. At this point we have returned to the original vision of occluded eternity to be gained through self-denial of Night⁶⁴, and terror is evoked in Enitharmon.

This is perhaps the most significant proof that Los and Enitharmon cannot be understood as prophet and truth of Blake's Christian vision. Enitharmon says:

I behold the Lamb of God descending

To Meet these Spectres of the Dead I therefore fear that he
 Will give us Eternal Death fit punishment for such
 Hideous offenders Uttermost extinction in eternal pain
 As ever dying life of stifling & obstruction shut out
 Of existence to be a sign & terror to all who behold
 Lest any should in futurity do as we have done in heaven
 Such is our state nor will the Son of God redeem us but destroy⁶⁵

This is not a prophecy of Los, but vision of she who cannot veil herself. Thus, she sees Jesus meeting the spectres of the dead they have created in their failed Uiro at the present and not in the future of six thousand years. This is the reason for her terror, for redemption in the present will collapse their power which is based on deferral to the future. For a Jesus saving at the present time does not require a structure of self-denial/ reward-in-heaven which religion through prophecy upholds. Enitharmon, therefore, sees the death of the three of them, expecting retribution for their setting up the whole Christian/Neoplatonic cycle, for this is the only way she can think, being herself a product of the reward punishment dialectic.

But Los is secure in his prophetic power. Just as in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where the system formed "enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to abstract the mental deities from their objects", so Los is sure that the vulgar will continue to believe them rather than the ever present Jesus because he turns everything around to suit their deferred structure rather than that of the fulfilment of vulgar terminology:

Enitharmon shady refuge from furious war
 Thy bosom is a soft repose for the weeping souls
 Of the piteous victims of battle there they sleep in happy obscurity
 They feed upon our life we are their victims Stern desire
 I feel to fabricate embodied semblances in which the dead

May live before us in our palaces & in our gardens of labour
Which now opened within the Centre we behold spread abroad
To form a world of sacrifice of brothers & sons & daughters
To comfort Orc in his dire suffering⁶⁶

Enitharmon is not a refuge from war, but as truth she is the prize of war, the Pallas Athene. Nor do the victims of war sleep in happy obscurity, for they are given eternal death as their reward for following this Neoplatonic spiritualism: the death of being only one part of Ezekiel's combined vision. Thus it is the victims of battle who are the victims of Los and Enitharmon, rather than vice versa. And further, the victims of battle have only to put off their trust in the future to gain real bodies, and have no need for the 'embodied semblances' Los offers them in the Centre of the pure outcome of Neoplatonism.

Enitharmon is delighted by this, and urges Los to go one step further and:

Fabricate forms sublime
Such as the piteous spectres may assimilate themselves into
They shall be ransoms for our souls that we may live⁶⁷

for the creation of sublimity shuts off for ever the possibility of the closure of metaphysics at the end of the six thousand years of prophetic history. This is certainly a reference to Burke's sublime⁶⁸, the central idea of which is that our enjoyment of the sublime consists in the way in which the imagination is engaged by a pleasurable form of terror and ignorance rather than intellectual clarity⁶⁹. As such, the sublime is the absolute opposite of Blake's view of the clarity and fulfilment of the metaphysically closed imagination, and will therefore ensure that the victims of battle will remain forever in need of the hope of fulfilment offered by the semblances of prophet and his counterpart.

The setting up of the sublime as the final pegging open of metaphysics now allows Los to inscribe upon the earth and heavens the "mighty circle" of Christian/Neoplatonic return with its hope of a future purity, because it is forever deferred and his position secure for ever. And thus it can only be with irony that Blake expresses this writing large by the prophet and his counterpart of the impossibility of return, for Los and Enitharmon choosing themselves "to meet Eternal death than to destroy/ The offspring of their care and pity" is a choice made with the certainty that their time will never end and Eternal Death never come to them, as the fulfilment of Prophecy in Ulro is unattainable through the sublime ignorance of those offspring that Los fixes in the circle permanent "upon the shining walls of heaven".

If we are correct in following Lincoln's arrangement of the Night as a whole and we are now to move on to the transposed second half of VIIb, we must account for the immediate appearance of the Shadowy Female to confront Orc in his fiery lake⁷⁰, for the almost complete withdrawal of Los from this section, and the apparently free reign given to Vala in Los's prophetic world. In our present reading of *The Four Zoas*, we would suggest that these all follow VIIa with a degree of necessity after the changing of the first word of VIIb from "Now" on Page 91, line 1 to "Thus" in the addition to the end of Page 98. For to replace the word "Now" with "Thus" suggests the logical entailment of VIIb following VIIa where without it there is only a temporal sequence, and as we shall hope to show, there are many different levels where such a logical imperative is brought into play. The most important of these, the immediate return of Vala to Los's world and the withdrawal of Los, being interconnected, and causing the wars of Orc, the rise of the sons of Urizen, the longing of Tharmas and the hope of the Daughters of Beulah.

At the end of Vlla, Los's inscription of the permanent circle (as opposed to the Neoplatonic spiral) of metaphysical return given a time span of six thousand years requires that he as prophet now retires into obscurity. This is because his own prophecies must lose their clarity, for otherwise they would become self-contradictory as clarity would be attainable at once through them. Thus the outset of prophecy requires an immediate veiling in order that it is prophecy and not disclosed truth, and here, the veiling takes the form of the return of Vala opposing Orc:

With sighs & howling & deep sobs that he might lose his rage⁷¹

But this is not an entreaty to him to calm his rage, rather she confronts him for fear that he does calm down. For the setting in motion of the six thousand year time scale requires that Orc's evil be active beneath the veil of perception as much as the good of Ulro. If there were only Ulro beneath the veil, the veil would soon fit so well that it would effectively vanish.

Thus, Orc rises because he is jealous that Vala has.

— now becomes Urizen's harlot

And the harlot of Los & the deluded harlot of the Kings of Earth⁷²

not knowing that he has been duped by Los into assisting in the setting up the six thousand year time span by opposing his evil to Los's good beneath Vala's veil. Thus his victory in battle, culminating in the crucifixion of Luvah⁷³ is almost instantaneous for no immortals oppose him. And so we read that Luvah is:

— laid — in a sepulcher

To die a death of Six thousand years bound round with desolation⁷⁴

for Orc's evil is logically necessary for the temporality of Los's prophecy. Thus, life is set up as death's dark vale: the place of penance where righteousness is demanded against the hope of future salvation from the fear of the evil which its own process must necessarily keep alive.

That Luvah is the victim of the time of prophecy may be understood from its twofold outcome, both related to his being counterpart of Vala. The first is the wars of the Sons of Urizen who from:

...the plow & harrow the loom
The hammer & the Chisel & the rule & compasses
They forged the sword and chariot of war the battle ax
The trumpet fitted to the battle⁷⁵

This is a result of Los and Enitharmon's dividing Urizen at the end of Villa⁷⁶. No longer a single scientific understanding of the world, reason separated into different opinions now becomes a cause of wars as each faction attempts to invent the "Wheel without wheel"⁷⁷, the idea without the earthly "shadow" of the object, Ulro, or:

Demonstration blind to all the simple rules of life⁷⁸

So the battle rages continually between Urizen's sons for possession of Vala in Los's circular world of always deferred destiny, where (in three added lines):

The Warriors mourn'd disappointed
They go out to war with Strong shouts & loud Clarions O Pity
They return with lamentations mourning & weeping⁷⁹

because (in another added line):

Thus in this world of Los, the love of Luvah which should obtain between Urizen's sons is sacrificed as Vala becomes a different Pallas Athene for each of Urizen's sons in a ghastly imitation of Tharmas' original intention of purification of the spirit in matter to gain purity.

So when Tharmas, originating father of this terrible world, calls to Vala thinking she is Enion, his own counterpart to be regained at his gaining of purity, it is a bitter irony that it is the loss of Luvah in the generations of Tharmas' original cycle by which Vala excuses her actions.

Lo him whom I love
Is hidden from me & never in all Eternity
Shall see him Enitharmon & Ahania combined with Enion
Hid him in that Outrageous form of Orc which torments me for Sin
For all my secret faults⁸¹

This is the sealing of the veil of perception on the world through the circularity of the argument of scepticism taken in each of its two meanings. For scepticism means both "uncertainty" and "seeking", where uncertainty leads to seeking for the truth and seeking for the truth leads only to further uncertainty. Thus, Blake puts the hideous logic of scepticism into the mouth of the veiler at the point at which she can never unveil herself, which is in the world of Los where following a warped view of Tharmas' original desire for spiritual purity from the body, Los demands the sublime which can never be apprehended by reason because of its own definition of apprehension through ignorance.

Vala has become Mnemosyne as:

She returns swift as a blight upon an infant bud⁸²

for the functioning of Mneme (taken up by Augustine) is of return and comparison of some shadow of former experiences with new and present experiences, to suggest identity of the presently experienced with the ideals which, through the logic of scepticism, and given an extended time scale will always fail. Scepticism will defer identity because the addition of new and slightly different objects will widen the range of requirements for identity, while an extended time scale will defer identity because of the temporal aspect of perception of the same object. The combination of these two will therefore enhance the sublime and forever defer the gaining of Uiro.

The imposition of the notion of sublime by Los and Enitharmon, now functioning in VIIb, is the subsuming of the Neoplatonism of the Myth of Er, (where each individual accounts for his or her own return to the spirit), into the Christian tradition. Thus, the Saviour who has already saved is deferred for ever from the remnant of Beulah, which now becomes a grave rather than a place of living.

But the Eternal Promise

They [*The Daughters of Beulah*] wrote on all their tombs & pillars & on
every Urn

These words If you will believe your brother shall rise again

In golden letters ornamented with sweet labours of Love

Waiting with Patience for the fulfilment of the Promise Divine⁸³

By the universalizing move of the Eternal Promise, resurrection through memory is given certainty through belief in its divine status as a doctrine of final causes. Thus the assimilation of Greek philosophy into the Christian tradition will not

suffer "doubt to rise up from the clouds of the Shadowy Female"⁸⁴, which was possible in the original work of Plato with regard to the position of the *Parmenides* to the rest of his work; and also possible in the structure of prophecy before the imposition of logic upon it.

What is most important however, is that the supposedly veiled world of Los and Enitharmon, the world of repentance, the valley of the shadow of death, with its good and evil, will not appear to be any different from the world as already saved by Jesus and directly apprehended in all its facets. The difference between these two worlds will be simply one of the attitude of the people who inhabit each world. For those who live in the world of Los and Enitharmon, and who believe in some future salvation will be ready to submit to political control in hope of that salvation (which control, in the forgetting of the "ancient Poets" also binds the controllers). Whereas those who live in the world already saved by Jesus, have no expectation of future salvation in hope of which they might allow themselves to be bound to a political system, the better to gain it.

Notes:

1 - (Summer, 1978).

2 - K 902/3 - "Blake seems to have written two drafts of *Night the Seventh*, but he never finally rejected either of them. ... Blake wrote clear instructions for transposing the first and second halves of the *Night* as it is printed here."

Ostriker 945 - "*Night the Seventh* [b]. A separate fragment, partially tallying with the situation at the close of VII[a] ... Blake indicates that the two halves of the *Night* should be transposed."

3 - K 902.

4 - Ostriker, 945.

5 - Called by him *Night VIIbis*.

6 - As Margoliouth is keen to point out, Blake left *Night II* unnumbered, and renumbered *Night III*. He also named *Night V* "*Book the Fifth*" at one time, but erased "*Book*" and rewrote "*Night*". Certainly, Blake was unsystematic about such things, for example putting two Chapter IV's in the *Book of Urizen*, but the question still remains as to why Blake did not renumber *Night VIIb* or discard it when he went as far as to put notes to his text for the purpose of transposition of its two halves.

7 - FZ Pages 87-90.

8 - See E 836.

9 - From FZ Page 85, line 22 - FZ Page 86, where lines surround the full page picture.

10 - Erdman claims this paper is in *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* (Summer, 1978).

11 - See Andrew Lincoln, "The Revision of the Seventh and Eighth Nights of *The Four Zoas*", in *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* (Summer, 1978). [Cited as Lincoln].

12 - FZ Page 95, line 8.

13 - Lincoln uses the term VIIa1 to designate VIIa before the additions of FZ Page 85, line 22 - FZ Page 90.

14 - Lincoln p.116.

15 - Which could be extraneous if the narrative was not intended to fit together in the way Lincoln suggested.

16 - Because either could have existed in numerous earlier forms which would account for incidents in VIIb assuming incidents in VIIa.

17 - A complete list of pencil additions taken from the manuscript:

FZ Page 3, ll. 7-8

FZ Page 4, ll. 41-44

FZ Page 9, ll. 8-18

FZ Page 11, line 3

FZ Page 12, ll. 25-29

FZ Page 18, line 10

FZ Page 20, whole page

FZ Page 22, ll. 26

FZ Page 23, line 1 Eyes changed for Porches

FZ Page 24, line 8

FZ Page 31, ll. 9-10

FZ Page 32, line 15

FZ Page 34, where the word "deathful" is inserted into a space in line 97

FZ Page 42 between ll. 17 and 18

FZ Page 56, ll. 20

FZ Page 64, line 24, where "Saying" is deleted and "& said" inserted

FZ Page 73, line 34

FZ Page 120, ll. 30-31.

- 18 - Apart from perhaps FZ Page 20.
- 19 - K 366, note 1.
- 20 - E 838, note to FZ Page 98, line 31.
- 21 - FZ Page 91, line 6.
- 22 - FZ Page 94, ll. 16-19.
- 23 - FZ Page 94, ll. 29-30.
- 24 - FZ Page 94, ll. 31-36.
- 25 - The similarity between this position of Urizen and Orc chained to the rock is striking, and that the actions of Urizen tend to follow those of Los seems to give weight to our reading.
- 26 - FZ Page 95, line 25.
- 27 - FZ Page 96, line 5.
- 28 - Ibid. line 2.
- 29 - Ibid. ll. 14-15.
- 30 - FZ Page 97, line 2.
- 31 - Revelation 19. 17-18. See Lincoln p.118.
- 32 - FZ Page 97, line 11. But Tharmas' desire for his Crystal Form, is not as Bloom suggests, the desire for return to his unfallen state, but considering the use of crystal for the boundaries of heaven in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, may be seen as his desire for his gaining of the state of Ulro clarity which he has created himself in the idea that he can be completely pure.
- 33 - FZ Page 90, line 24.
- 34 - Ostriker, 946.
- 35 - Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 365.
- 36 - E 960.
- 37 - FZ Page 93, ll. 24 - 27.
- 38 - FZ Page 20, line 29.

- 39 - That is, the remoulding of Luvah in Night II.
- 40 - FZ Page 78, ll. 4-6.
- 41 - See below.
- 42 - FZ Page 79, ll. 1-3.
- 43 - cf. "The Garden of Love" from the *Songs of Experience*.
- 44 - See the argument in Chapter 6 above.
- 45 - FZ Page 79, line 16.
- 46 - Ibid.
- 47 - Here, we might cite the problem of quantum mechanics which produces constant results from a random source as supporting Blake's rejection of the abstraction of mathematics as universally true, but this would be to go beyond the bounds of the present work.
- 48 - FZ Page 80, line 5-7.
- 49 - FZ Page 80, ll. 31-32.
- 50 - FZ Page 85, ll. 19-21.
- 51 - FZ Page 61, line 7.
- 52 - FZ Page 34, ll. 60 - 90.
- 53 - This seems remarkably like Kant's transcendental imperative of 1788, but it cannot be certain whether Blake read Kant, or knew of Kant's work at this time as it had not been translated out of German. With the lack of information, we must persist in understanding this transcendental step as Plato's dialectic.
- 54 - FZ Page 85, line 23.
- 55 - See FZ Page 83.
- 56 - See the Spectre's long speech on FZ Page 84.
- 57 - FZ Page 85, ll. 37-38.
- 58 - FZ Page 86, ll. 7-9.
- 59 - CWP, I, p. v.

60 - FZ Page 87, line 11.

61 - Which would be the four thousand years of Jewish history plus two thousand years of Christian history ending in the millenium.

62 - FZ Page 87, ll. 27-28.

63 - FZ Page 87, line 30.

64 - See Chapter 7.

65 - FZ Page 87, ll. 52 - 59.

66 - FZ Page 90, ll. 5 - 13.

67 - FZ Page 90, ll. 22 - 24.

68 - Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London, 1756). Blake used Burke's profile as a robber on the frontispiece of *America*, and mentions his ideas with some spleen in the *Annotations to Reynolds*.

69 - Definition from the *Pan Dictionary of Philosophy* ed. by Antony Flew (London: Macmillan, 1979).

70 - FZ Page 91, line 2.

71 - Ibid. line 4.

72 - Ibid. ll. 14-15. The second of these two lines is an addition which would not make sense unless it were preceded by VIIa with its additions on FZ Pages 85-90, where Los's World came into being to be hidden by Vala from him and the vulgar.

73 - FZ Page 91, line 21 - FZ Page 92, line 16.

74 - FZ Page 92, ll. 14-15.

75 - Ibid. ll. 17-20.

76 - FZ Page 98, ll. 58-62.

77 - FZ Page 92, line 26.

78 - Ibid. line 33.

79 - FZ Page 93, ll. 29-31.

80 - Ibid. line 33.

81 - FZ Page 94, ll. 14-18.

82 - Ibid. line 29.

83 - FZ Page 95, ll. 4-9.

84 - Ibid. line 10.

Chapter 11 - An Unholy Apocalypse.

This political control acting recursively upon Los and Enitharmon, can be seen from the beginning of Night VIII. It is usual to read this night as the "Prelude to Apocalypse"¹, the winter world before the glories of Night IX "Being the Last Judgement", but from the first lines, we can see that this is only so in the world according to Los: the infinitely deferred Ulro world.

Then All in Great Eternity Met in the Council of God
As one Man Even Jesus upon Gilead & Hermon
Upon the Limit of Contraction to create the fallen man²

As Erdman points out, these lines were erased from Night I in two different places: Page 8, lines 8-11, and Page 21, line 7. In the latter case, the line remained extant, but the geography was altered to "the Mountain of Snowdon". Following our surmise at that point of our reading³: that the council of Great Eternity was placed outside the Holy Land to suggest that it did not share a common geography with the Bible and was therefore at fault, this returning of the council to the holy land must be seen as the most successful part of the Ulro vision of Los's world after the labours of the intervening Nights.

But that however successful Ulro vision may be it will ultimately fail for it is still an attempt to see the world "as one Man ... Upon the Limit of Contraction", the limit of the Miltonic heaven. Thus Blake writes ironically that the council have convened to "create the fallen Man" for they cannot do otherwise than create something eternally dead, and nine lines later the Man wakes, sneezes seven times in a parody of the refiner's fire, and reposes once again.

Nevertheless, the power which Los has gained in the action of Nights II - VII, which has allowed him to call the Eternals to Gilead and Hermon, is great enough to delude the dead of Beulah into believing him. Thus they believe the vision of the sleeping Man in the saviour's arms⁴ because of the independent life given to Vala in Night VII:

For nothing could restrain the dead in Beulah from descending
Unto Ulros night tempted by the Shadowy females sweet
Delusive cruelty they descended away from the Daughters of Beulah⁵

For as we saw in the previous chapter, the action of Night VII has allowed Los to become deluded by the structure of his own prophecy in the constructed certainty of its deferred outcome, and to believe that he can be free of the problem of the truth of the myth of future revelation which we saw confounded him at the end of the first Night. However, although at this point Los:

could enter into Enlitharmons bosom and explore
Its intricate Labyrinths⁶

which should announce the fulfilment of prophecy, and certainly gives him power over "the dead of the wars of Urizen and Tharmas"⁷:

the Divine Countenance shone
In Golgonooza⁸

Thus again the failure of Los's project (which is what he wants) is dramatized, for Golgonooza is below Beulah in the "unknown Space"⁹ into which Los and Urizen fell in Night I, and is their own self-created place of salvation. Still not

comprehending the struggles of Los and Enitharmon in their present salvation,
the Daughters of Beulah looked down into Golgonooza and:

... saw
With joy the bright Light & in it a Human form
And knew he was the Saviour Even Jesus & they worshipped
Astonished Comforted Delighted in notes of Rapturous Ecstasy
All Beulah stood astonished Looking down to Eternal Death
They saw the Saviour beyond the Pit of death and destruction
For whether they looked upward they saw the Divine Vision
Or whether they looked downward they saw the Divine Vision
Surrounding them on all sides beyond sin & death & hell¹⁰

In other words the Daughters of Beulah (the place of the Lord in the Land, of Ezekiel's complete vision), were astonished to see the Saviour anywhere near Eternal Death (the place of spirit purified of the pollution of the body, the place of Ezekiel's Wheels), and even when they did, they always saw him 'beyond' it, never actually in it, and saving it. Thus in Los's world it is left to Enitharmon to erect:

... Looms in Luban's Gate
And ... in these Looms she wove the Spectres
Bodies of Vegetation¹¹

For in the world of constructed salvation, ideal bodies must be constructed to give the 'the Dead in Ulro' the impression that they are opened to Beulah.

Following this introduction which sets the scene after the action of Night VII, Night VIII is driven forward by yet another paradox in the manner of the other nights. For here, rather than finally destroying the factions of Urizen's Sons, the

universalizing move of Los towards his self-created Apocalypse reunites the divided Sons of Urizen into a whole again¹² in the face of the new Luvah, whose robes clothe the new Lamb of God which Enitharmon has claimed to see on Mount Zion. This is because the new project of Los's prophecy to defer spiritual salvation for six thousand years for the purpose of his own survival is seen from Urizen's point of view as a worshipping of Orc hidden beneath Vala's veil, for in Night VII, Luvah has become Orc for Urizen. As we saw in the discussion of VIb above, at the start of Los's new world the fighting between the different factions of Urizen's Sons became their way to Ulro, opposition between them became necessary to produce the purity of the "Wheel without wheel", and thus Luvah as love between them was the victim of their process of empirical purification. Now, however, after Los's sinking into forgetfulness as to why he set up prophetic time in his belief that he has reached salvation, The Prince of Love becoming the single guiding light of the new world of prophetic time, will therefore, reunite Urizen's sons against him as love is antithetical to them.

Considering this in terms of history, we might suggest that the setting up of Los's world equates with the setting up of the Johannine church, which, while waiting for apocalypse resides in a false certainty of the second coming and retires from the world to contemplation in the hope of love's ultimate protection, like a monk. However, the hope of the protection of love is empirically disproved by the continued ravages of hate, and leaves a space for the return of the temporal power of Reason or Science which rises up to fill in the gap and explain the necessity of hate.

But this is not a wilful usurpation of love by science, for Urizen:

saw Orc a Serpent form augmenting times on times

In the fierce battle & he saw the Lamb of God & the World of Los
Surrounded by his dark machines for Orc augmented swift¹³

and thus:

Urizen in self decie|e|t his warlike preparations fabricated¹⁴

In these lines we can see that as Urizen has an empirical rather than a spiritual point of view, he draws his fixed rationality from the sensuous fruits of his own perspective, and thus thinks that it is the bread his daughter Uveth makes from the fruit of the Tree of Mystery which gives Orc such power¹⁵.

Nor is it a simple usurpation of love by science, for as Urizen takes to battle, he is caught in his own logic as:

Sparkies of Dire Affliction issud round his frozen limbs
Horrible hooks & nets he formd twisting the cords of iron
And brass & molten metals cast in hollow globes & bor'd
tubes in petrific steel & rammd combustibles & wheels
And chains & pullies fabricates all around the heavens of Los¹⁶

Rather than being able to attack Orc and defeat him for the good defined in his rationale, Urizen is logically allied to Orc by the act of going into battle against him in Los's world of love. For this is the world where that which Urizen sees as Orc is understood by those allied to Los to be the Lamb of God in Luvah's robes, and thus where Urizen's entering the war against what he deems to be bad is understood by Los as good. This confusing position is best understood with reference to the dual role of the Prester Serpent seen as body by Tharmas and spirit by Urizen, discussed in the previous chapter.

The failure of the double point of view gives rise to Urizen's battle taking:

a form
He intended not a Shadow hermaphrodite black & opake¹⁷

That the battle is "black and opake" suggests this failure and that it is called hermaphrodite dramatizes the opposition which still exists between Los and Urizen even though it is not what they want. Thus, to protect Golgonooza, and his type of good from Urizen's, Los changes his criteria of spiritual purity:

That only through the Gates of Death they can enter to Enlitharmon¹⁸

This is another significant victory of Los over Urizen. By excluding Ulro from apprehension by means other than waiting for the end of prophetic time through his use of the sublime, Los evoked only war against him from the empirical view; but by excluding Ulro from apprehension by the living, he has set up spiritual purity as something to fight and die for under his banner. Thus the battle itself humanizes and:

Troop by troop the bestial droves rend one another sounding loud
The instruments of sound & troop by troop in human forms they urge
The dire confusion till the battle faints those that remain¹⁹

And while the people become beasts killing one another for spiritual purity, Urizen furnishes them with the logic of his point of view :

that chains might run
Thro ranks of war spontaneous & that hooks & boring screws
Might act according to their forms by innate cruelty²⁰

Thus, a new paradox arises between Los and Urizen, for both are once again demanding the same price, now death in war, as the way to purity, but for different reasons. While Los demands death as the price for his spiritual purity, Urizen's logic demands war against Luvah hidden by Vala as Orc, as the price of his empirical purity. Thus, Vala appears to remain with Urizen spurring him on with her pleading for the return of Luvah²¹, while she appears to leave Los whose waiting in "certainty" of the second coming removes her power over his world.

At this point in the poem, we would suggest that Blake has completed drawing out the stories of the formation of his enemies, the Priest and Philosopher. The priestly world of Los in which Jerusalem is seen as the method of bringing about a Miltonic salvation as she

beginneth to put off the dark Satanic body²²

waits for the "Ends of Beulah"²³ at the outcome of the Johannine Revelation after the birth of the anti-Christ Urizen as "the dark Satanic body in the Virgin's womb"²⁴. For this world and its followers are opposed in every way to "The Mills of Satan and Beelzeboul [which] stand round the roots of Urizen's tree."²⁵ This is the world of contraction, where everything is desired to be seen in an identical way through the use of Jerusalem the unified spiritual body of Ulro.

In their turn, the followers of the philosophical world of Urizen gather in the "Synagogue of Satan"²⁶ to worship Vala as "Mystery"²⁷. This is the "best possible"²⁸ world of the philosophers, a world of expansion (in Blake's terminology), where mystery "divides to multitude" "when viewed near"²⁹. It is the world of solipsism which nails the unified vision of Lamb of God "upon the tree of Mystery"³⁰, seeing it as Orc, and requiring individual proof rather than faith to gain the identical outcome: Ulro.

And each is still beset by the problem of desiring the clarity that lies beneath Vaia, now become Rahab in her scarlet robes³¹. For Los, in a full account of his prophecy³² cannot give her an answer as to what is the truth but merely make further demands of faith upon Rahab and the people:

Thou art Rahab Lo the tomb what can we purpose more
Lo Enitharmon terrible & beautiful in Eternal youth
Bow down before her you her children & set Jerusalem free

Los and Enitharmon are still separated as in the manner of Night II, the one entombed while the other is alive, and it is still the removal of the veiling of Vaia as Rahab³³ that is required to know when the end of Prophetic time has come.

And Urizen too, "sitting in his web of dece[i]tful Religion" feels "the female death a dull & numming stupor"³⁴, for however much he wants to abstract life to discover the ideal forms:

life cannot be quenched³⁵

Urizen cannot rid himself of the always changing perceptions of the matter of Orc, and thus separates himself into stony form and serpent. Ulro and the life which supplies perceptions. This process is like Los's forgetting he has set up Prophetic time, for:

Urizen repentant forgets his wisdom in the abyss
In forms of priesthood in the dark delusions of repentance
Repining in his heart & spirit that Orc reigned over all
And his wisdom servd but to augment the indefinite lust³⁶

Just as in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the system is formed by attempting to abstract mental deities from their objects, Priesthood begins and worship:

And at length they pronounced that the Gods had ordered such things
Thus Men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast³⁷

Whether the deities be spiritual deities, or the deities of pure objectivity or absolute value.

Faced with the offer of these two ways to the truth, Tharmas and Urthona choose Los's apparently certain way³⁸ and shun Urizen's logic. In particular:

Tharmas on high rode furious thro afflicted worlds
Pursuing the Vain Shadow of Hope fleeing from identity
In abstract false Expanses³⁹

as he still hopes for the return of Enion, his original intention, to be gained through the world ravaged by Los's prophecy. Ahania, Urizen's counterpart, mocks him⁴⁰ and his hope in St. John's Revelation which she sees collapsing⁴¹, blaming Los's religion for Murdering the Eternal Man. Enion in her turn rebukes Ahania, favouring Los to Urizen, for as Tharmas' counterpart she follows Tharmas with certainty that:

The Lamb of God has rent the veil of Mystery soon to return⁴²

and foretells the reconstruction of the Eternal Man from "the scattered portions of his immortal body" in the same way that was announced at the beginning of Night 4³. But here is her mistake, for she says:

he stores his thoughts
As in a store house in his memory he regulates the forms
Of all beneath & all above⁴⁴

This is the creation of deities from the human breast by the Augustinian view of language gained through the return of the past through memory, grafted upon the Platonic theory of forms. And it is Enion's mistake for memories cannot regulate anything *beneath*, but they do lend themselves to a belief that things should fit into a certain pattern through expectation, but for the actual process of 'learn & forget & return'⁴⁵. For where Enion expects that what is learned will fit a fixed pattern, and even if forgotten will return intact to that pattern, her mistake is that whatever the ideal form constructed from however large the sample, the return of this form from forgetting through memory is always liable to be found wanting by what we saw Eliot called 'the continuous deterioration of language'⁴⁶. Usage changes the objective meaning of words, and this is why the Eternal Man's labour in the 'dark valley'⁴⁷ of life in Los's world will never be completed, he will never 'reassume his ancient bliss'⁴⁸ for objectivity and absolute terms can never be set up once and for all.

Thus:

Rahab triumphs over all⁴⁹

because these two projects of Los and Urizen both seeking the same goal of pure abstraction, both kept from it by the veiling of Vala, may now be melded together completely:

she took Jerusalem

Captive A Willing Captive by delusive arts impell'd
To worship Urizens dragon form⁵⁰

And this combination was the revelation St. John saw on Patmos⁵¹, and from which the "Souls cry out to be delivered"⁵². And which Blake points out that the saint saw from a Urizenic point of view, where Vala appears as "the Harlot of the Kings of Earth"⁵³, preparing food for Orc out of the fruit of Mystery, rather than as Jerusalem the spiritual body. This clearly follows from the arguments about "spiritual wickedness in high places" discussed in Chapter 7, and therefore it is not surprising that Deism⁵⁴, as the doctrine that belief in God can commend itself to the human mind only by his inherent reasonableness, derives from St. John's initial error, as Satan (here Urizen):

resolv'd in open Sanhedrim
To burn Mystery with fire & form another from her ashes⁵⁵

What is perhaps surprising, however, is that this Deism is also a return of the "Natural Religion"⁵⁶ of Tharmas. It is a return of Neoplatonism in the conjoining of Urizen and Los in their parallel apocalypses. For now, the empty space of Prophetic time which was hitherto filled with nothing more than love in the waiting for apocalypse, is filled with the step by step spiralling purifications of Urizen's logic.

Following the argument that *Vala* was originally a Neoplatonic poem, this could be seen as no more than Blake twisting the action of the poem that he might retain the final, and what is generally agreed to be the greatest poetry of the whole epic. However, just as Los and Enitharmon, Rintrah and Palambron return to cover the world after the personal revelation of *Milton*, we would rather argue that Blake left Night IX largely intact as a warning against the desire for

self-annihilation in the effort to try to achieve the abstraction of Ulro, which is the inevitable result of the combination of faith and reason towards the same Neoplatonic goal.

Thus, the added beginning of Night IX shows first Los and then Urizen beginning Apocalypse before the people enter the presses in order that they may be relieved of their bodies and gain the "purity" of Ulro in the spiritual reign of "Sweet Science". And Los and Urizen must go through this ceremony together to hide the deficiency of the joint system.

Los's apparent moving first to apocalypse in the first five lines of the night is most confusing, and the lines are worth studying in detail for they hold the key to Blake's position at this stage of the poem.

And Los & Enitharmon builded Jerusalem weeping
Over the Sepulcher & over the crucified body
Which to their Phantom Eyes appear'd still in the Sepulcher
But Jesus stood beside them in the Spirit separating
Their Spirit from their body Terrified at Non Existence
For such they deem'd the death of the body⁵⁷

The building of Jerusalem is a continuation of the project begun in Night VII and unified in Night VIII, a creating of the single embodied semblance ready for the unified apocalypse for which they wait in dissembling tears⁵⁸, but hereafter the logic folds back on itself. For Los and Enitharmon have set the death of the body as the price to be paid for spiritual purification⁵⁹, and as we saw in the discussion of VIIIb above, they need this death, unified by Orc in the murder of Luvah, for the functioning of prophetic temporality. Thus "Their Phantom Eyes" see the body of Luvah in the sepulcher, and weep over it for it has become the symbol of the

death of all. But it must be remembered that they do not want the total death of the body for it would mark the completion of Jerusalem and herald the end of prophetic time⁶⁰, and of their reign, and thus bring about their Non Existence of which they are Terrified. Therefore, Jesus, as the spiritual form of the unified body of Luvah must also be placed beside them outside the sepulcher "Separating/ Their Spirit from their body". This is not Jesus the saviour in the present moment, but the Jesus of Los's vision of the council of God on Mount Hermon; in other words, Jesus acting as creator of the Miltonic limit of contraction, the price yet to be paid for salvation, or the end of metaphysics held at a distance.

But further analysis of this double position of Jesus as body and spirit shows that this is not Los alone moving to apocalypse but the combination of Los with Urizen, and the logic of the first five lines folds once again. For the body in the sepulcher is Luvah killed by Orc as the grounding of prophetic temporality⁶¹ in Los's point of view; as well as Luvah seen as Orc nailed to the tree of Mystery from Urizen's point of view⁶². And Jesus as the spirit waiting outside the tomb is the promise of future purity from matter for Los⁶³, as well as the obstruction of that purity from matter for Urizen who has become Satan in the setting up of St. John's Revelation in Night VIII.

But even this double doubling has not been able to solve the problem of Vala, for the ashes of Mystery reanimated into Deism at the moment of the combining of Los and Urizen⁶⁴. And so at once Los tries to bring about apocalypse by himself, seizing the sun and moon to discover "The foundations of the Eternal Hills"⁶⁵; and the books of Urizen unroll to let loose the serpent form of Orc to consume matter, for by so doing they create "Universal confusion"⁶⁶ to hide the double place which the body and spirit of Jesus holds in their combined

world, and to hide the fact that they have been unsuccessful in removing the veil of Vala.

Thus, at the beginning of Los's token apocalypse, the 'end' of metaphysics is no grand eschatology but the Spectres of Urthona and Enitharmon mingling 'like two shadows on a wall'⁶⁷. And when Rahab and Tirzah are consumed⁶⁸ by the joining of the two spectres, there is no general clarity of vision because the bodies of Urthona and Enitharmon are 'buried in the ruins of the Universe'⁶⁹. The eschatology of the non Platonic crucifixion, of body *with* spirit rather than spirit alone, has been lost in the confusion, and thus Los and Urizen are saved.

And at the unrolling of Urizen's books and the serpent form of Orc - the abstracted form of matter⁷⁰ - rising to consume the world in fire, there is no clarity to be gained either. For in the action of Orc there are two metaphors which seem to point to an end different from clarification: 'resistless pillars of fire' and 'clotted gore'. Each suggests a solidity in something which should be in motion, as though the life has been removed from the original elements: rather as a word does not bear any resemblance to the thing it represents. The first refers to Orc's consuming the world and the second to the sounding of the apocalyptic trumpet from 'the hollow den'⁷¹. Here, after the announcement of the rise of Deism as the searching for God through reason or words rather than things, it would perhaps not seem too bold a surmise to equate the two metaphors. We might further suggest that their import at this point of the poem is one similar to the move in contemporary empiricism because of the uncertainty Locke had with *substance*, (as Vala covering over the tree of Mystery), to the scepticism about matter and pursuant idealism of Berkeley⁷². For although the animals disperse at this move, Idealism through scepticism does have the advantage of cutting through Mystery with one blow:

In the fierce flames the limbs of Mystery lay with howling
And deep despair⁷³

This is not the removal of Vala, but Vala as Mystery; nevertheless it is a powerful move as it accepts the veil of perception as the absolute goal of knowledge in its abandoning hope of anything behind it. Thus it is the pegging open of metaphysics but without a suggestion of future closure for it abandons closure as an eschatology of matter and spirit from its starting point.

In this way, Urizenic philosophy has come close to the open-ended religion of Los and joins in with the demand for the purification of mind (although here as intellect rather than spirit) over an unspecified time span, and with no specified goal. Together, in their self wrought apocalypses they have become the perfect form of political control, for neither have to give any reward for the dutiful following of their system by the living, and both may exact the most careful obedience through the means of bodily denial⁷⁴

Thus, the burning of the tree of Mystery brought about by quasi apocalypse - although it was the ashes of Mystery which animated into the Deism which claims to burn it - deluges the earth with black blood:

* of living flames winged with intellect
And Reason⁷⁵

for its requirement is "mental fire", pure spirit from the "clotted gore" and "hollow dens"⁷⁶ of the material world it assaults. Ironically, it nevertheless bathes the "Limbs" of the dwellers in the Holy city with "bright visions of Eternity"⁷⁷ - although perhaps this is not strictly ironic in the imperative the limbs are placed under: to die for spiritual purity.

Now, the original Night follows almost unaltered from its Neoplatonic form continuing towards the apotheosis of religious science, but again, it is the few alterations and additions which are most important for the present reading. The first of these comes on the second page of the original Night, with the addition of the line:

I hear the Mystery howling in these flames of Consummation⁷⁸

This is added to the first speech of the Eternal Man since Night III, where he longed for a return to the safety of Urizen's Heideggerian type house of metaphysics. Having slept from the end of Night III, the Eternal Man does not know what has brought about the present confusion to which he has awoken, and thinks it due to the 'war within [his] members, [his] sons exiled from [his] breast pass to & fro before [him]'⁷⁹ His idea follows from the original project of Tharmas to regenerate unity from division through generation, of which Urizen's house was the level at which he chose to remain. Thus for the Eternal Man, Mystery is no more than the destruction of Urizen's house. He cannot recognize that the dragon form of Urizen is part of the apocalyptic world for it has no place in his Neoplatonic understanding of the world, and his desire that 'the Man of future times become as in days of old'⁸⁰ is the view of Man as the measure of all things:

for as the Person so is his life proportioned⁸¹

Here for the first time we can see the driving force behind Neoplatonism, and the reason that the Eternal Man wanted to remain in Urizen's house for he demands that Urizen:

Come forth from slumbers of thy cold abstraction come forth
Arise to Eternal births⁸²

Taken as part of the logic of man the measure of all things, this suggests that the generations of human kind are understood by the Eternal Man to be equivalent to the Neoplatonic generations which will lead to purification. Thus from physical generation, this single level of abstraction is the 'dread form of Certainty'⁸³ that was the ground on which the Eternal Man empowered Urizen in Night III. (Here we might be reminded of the great genealogies of the Bible leading from David to Jesus as paradigms of the Neoplatonic generation towards purity.) Therefore, seeing the confusion around him the Eternal Man turns on Urizen and blames the further abstractions of the 'self-destroying beast form'd Science'⁸⁴ for causing the present state of war.

In the Neoplatonic poem this by itself would lead Urizen to re-enter the cycle and put off Error⁸⁵, and reach the complete purity of the endpoint of the Neoplatonic cycle; however Blake added five lines to the Eternal Man's speech:

With Mystery the Harlot & with Satan for Ever & Ever
Error can never be redeemed in all Eternity
But Sin Even Rahab is redeemed in blood & fury & jealousy
That line of blood that stretched across the windows of the morning
Redeemed from Errors power Wake thou Dragon of the Deep⁸⁶

These lines make a distinction between Error and venial sin, and thus recast the position of the Eternal Man from one which is simply Neoplatonic where all error could be disposed of, to one which, while accepting the purification from sin, partakes of an absolute Error. In this way we can see that, on reawakening at the quasi apocalypse of Urizen and Los, the Eternal Man has unknowingly become

the inheritor of both of their systematic traditions, the logical child of the double apocalypse. He recognizes Mystery as an absolute Error, for in the new science of Urizen (the science of the veil of perception), it is an absolute error to consider anything behind the veil. And he recognizes Satan as an absolute Error because in Los's new religion, the Last Judgement logic necessitates that there be an absolute standard of good and evil by which to make judgement, even if it is infinitely deferred.

The Eternal Man's anger aimed at Urizen alone therefore puts a wedge between Urizen and Los for the Eternal Man does not know the part the religion of Los, returning from the generation above Urizen, has played in the formation of chaos. Thus Urizen turns against the prophet, making him wish that he:

never drank the wine nor eat the bread
Of dark mortality. 87

On the same page there are five alterations, the first of "the past" for "futurity", and the other four of "remembrance" for "futurity". These are significant for they show a radical alteration in Blake's drawing of the relationship between Los and Urizen in the earlier and later understanding of the poem.

Reading the page in the original form, the error Urizen supposed that Los had shown him was to cast his view into the past to redeem sin. This would follow from a view of prophecy in the traditional form of knowledge gained from "undivulged sources" which is discussed in Chapter 2. The prophecy of Los would be trawled until its unblemished heart of truth was found by looking far enough back. As a mistake which Urizen would put off in the original form of the page, it would be substituted for the Neoplatonic view of purity as futural, and the result of further generations.

But reading the page in its altered form, the error Urizen supposes Los has shown him is to cast his view into the future to redeem sin. This follows from the uptake of Urizen into Los's world of salvation at a distance which we have seen in Nights VII and VIII. Here futurity as the mistake which Urizen puts off in the altered speech is seen by him to be "in this moment"⁸⁸, rather than at a distance for the rising of the Eternal Man was supposed to be the goal of the whole cycle. Thus he expects the return of Ahania as his own fulfilment, and she comes to him only to die immediately:

Ahania rose in joy
Excess of Joy is worse then grief - her heart beat high her blood
Burst its bright Vessels She fell down at the feet of Urizen
Outstretched a Smiling corse⁸⁹

Her death is the sign that this is a quasi apocalypse for she would only have lived at a perfect eschatology. And, that the Eternal Man tells Urizen that Ahania will rise again at some *future* time the sign that he is the inheritor of Los's tradition as well as Urizen's in the double apocalypse.

Working from the logic of the Neoplatonic poem *Vaia*, where Urizen puts off his faith in the past as the place of purity, the Eternal Man would have told Urizen that Ahania would rise again later as teaching Urizen the way to return to the futural goal of Neoplatonism, guaranteed by the Lamb of God in Jerusalem's bosom, and thus there would be no need to explain the reason for Ahania's death. However to explain the death of Ahania, and show that the rising of the Eternal Man is not a perfect eschatology in *The Four Zoas*, (where Urizen has put off faith in the future because of the reanimation of the Eternal Man), Blake added the three lines:

The three daughters of Urizen Guard Ahanias Death couch
Rising from the confusion in tears & howlings & despair
Calling upon their fathers Name upon their Rivers dark⁹⁰

The daughters, who first appeared when Urizen attempted to make an encyclopaedic empirical study of all things at the beginning of Night VI⁹¹, now return as a reminder of the solipsism into which Urizen will fall once again if he believes this is a perfect eschatology. For they call their father by his "Name", as though mocking his first approach to them where he could read their names on their foreheads but did not recognize them as his own daughters. Thus, as Urizen declares:

I have erred & my Error remains with me
What Chain encompasses in what Lock is the river of light confined
Where shall we take our stand to view the Infinite and unbounded
Or where are human feet for Lo our eyes are in the heavens⁹²

he is no longer trying to put off error in the Neoplatonic way. In *The Four Zoas*, this marks his taking the step which Hume took to counteract the claims of the solipsism of Berkeley's idealism. For Hume, the Self - "me" - is a construct, and thus a place of error. Because the self is no more than an induction from the constant conjunction of bundles of perceptions, and therefore has no stable place in knowledge. This counteracts solipsism by removing the binding authority of the perceiver, and ends up with a non hierarchical series of perceptions in which perceptions of the body or mind have no precedence over perceptions of supposedly external objects. Thus perceptions by the body as the stable centre are criticized and objectivity and subjectivity are broken down into a flat lifeless psychologism, where fictions such as causation are argued against as being no

more than the association of ideas. Thus the "Universe explodes"⁹³ for with the dismantling of the Self all other chains of causality must be criticized as they are seen as inductions of the induction of the self which perceives.

Because of this, in this upturned world of the quasi Last Judgement "trembling the Judge springs from his throne"⁹⁴ to entreat for forgiveness for his having judged, which is to employ an absolute level, now shown to be an induction. But in an addition to the page:

The Prisoner answers you scourged my father to death before my face
While I stood bound with cords & heavy chains. Your hypocrisy
Shall now avail you nought. So speaking he dashed him with his foot⁹⁵

This is because the result of Hume's psychologism is not a harmonious world, but a world where the last shall come first, and in which therefore, there will still be judgements made, although by those who were previously subject to judgement. Therefore rather than a purity and harmony of non hierarchical perceptions, all that has happened with the dismantling of the self is that the hierarchy of the world has been reversed. If we are to understand this in Humean terms, we can suggest that Blake was drawing on the manifest inconsistencies of Hume's writing, for although the philosopher's criticism of induction ought to lead to a general anarchy of perceptions, he nevertheless admonished his reader, that confronted by the:

Impertinent solicitations [of] arrogant bigotry and superstition — A wise
man . . . proportions his belief to the evidence⁹⁶

Thus, he relies for his concluded anarchy of perception upon an inducted belief in the truth of evidence from perception. And further than this, the world of

psychological anarchy derived from stable foundations is couched by Blake in *The Four Zoas* in the terminology of the Revelation of St. John:

a throne and pavement of precious stones, surrounded by twenty four
venerable patriarchs
And these again surrounded by four Wonders of the Almighty
Incomprehensible pervading all amidst & round about
Fourfold each in the other reflected they are named Life's in Eternity.⁹⁷

Without the addition of the reversed judgement of the Prisoner leading to the implications of Hume's paradoxical position, and without the altered view of the Revelation discussed throughout this reading of the poem, this section could be read as Bloom suggests that:

perhaps Blake's point on line 38 is that the Zoas in Eternity are definitive
of Life, hence the possessive in Life's.⁹⁸

But this cannot be the case in the upturned world of Hume, for the reason Urizen and the Fallen Man cannot enter the Consummation of the "Lord coming in Judgement"⁹⁹, is not because there needs be a final Neoplatonic purification by the Plow of Ages as might have been the case in *Vala*, (and which takes up the rest of the poem), but because in Hume's world of non hierarchical perceptions, absolutes - which are final judgements - are *impossible* as well as necessary. There can be no stable and once and for all division of life into four parts because the stability of Eternity in which the Fourfold inter-reflect is a logical contradiction of the Fourfold which are necessary to it.

We can perhaps see this more clearly with a schematic look at Hume's paradoxical philosophy. The basic idea which causes the anarchy of perceptions

is: "All known X are Y" does not logically lead to the proposition "All X are Y". But for this to be true the language of the propositions must be stable for all readers of it, and at all times. Thus Hume is drawing conclusions from a framework which is thereby destabilized.

In the same way, when:

from the hand of Urizen the myriads fall like stars
Into their own appointed places¹⁰⁰

once again they become:

like wintry flocks like forests stripped of leaves¹⁰¹

in the stable places assigned to them. This may be seen as Urizen proportioning his belief to the evidence of his own perceptions, and in fixing the places of the objects of his perceptions, reinstating solipsism and removing the life from the objects of his perception.¹⁰² Blake once again makes an addition to the page:

The daughters of Urizen stand with cups & measures of foaming wine
Immense upon the heavens with bread & delicate repasts¹⁰³

For the Daughters of Urizen return mocking Urizen for yet another solipsistic viewpoint of appointing of places for the myriad in the "terrible wide universal harvest"¹⁰⁴. Be it anarchic or not, it is still a once and for all assignment. Thus the Daughters stand with bread and wine to feed Orc, the rival of Urizen's formal purity, as they did in Night VI.

This puts the successful revival of Ahania¹⁰⁵ in a different perspective. In the Neoplatonic poem, Ahania returns to life of the spirit as the reflected light of

Urizen to whom she is 'the harvest Moon'¹⁰⁶, and the two of them are desired by the Eternal Man who is separated from them as the purifying agent - matter - from the purified spirit in the Neoplatonic cycle into which Urizen has returned. But after the changes made to the poem, Ahania may only be seen to be returned to Urizen from his own viewpoint after the scattering of his perceptions from his hand. Thus this fulfilment is illusory because as we saw above, the setting up of Urizen's viewpoint as absolute in Hume's world may only be effected by taking a self contradictory step. Thus although this appears to be the endpoint of clarity, the Eternal Man is driven to dreams of spirituality at a distance, in Beulah, the desire for the Lord in the land, as in the separated world of Urizen's new point of view, his body is "redeem'd to be permanent"¹⁰⁷: it will never be consumed into spirit.

But since Urizen thinks his world purified, Orc also appears to have consumed himself¹⁰⁸ - his matter become spirit - and his spiritual forms, Luvah and Vala, are given once again to Urizen by the Eternal Man, who sets them back into "the place of seed"¹⁰⁹ - the place of generation. In the Neoplatonic poem, this would signify their being replaced in generation towards the regaining of purity which is expected at future times at future descents of the spirit when gods are "thrown down from their high station". But in the rewritten poem this signifies that *Urizen has become completely like Los*. He has drawn out a permanent place for himself from the changeable world, which is akin to Los's separation of deities from the human breast. Here it takes the form of the transcendental status which must be afforded to the language of Urizen's propositions which give rise to the perceptual and spiritual anarchy which protects Urizen from reintegration into the Fourfold in Eternity. Hence follows Urizen speaking the most ironic turn of the poem:

If Gods combine against Man Setting their Dominion above
The Human form Divine. Thrown down from their high Station
In the Eternal heavens of Human Imagination buried beneath
In dark Oblivion with incessant pangs ages on ages
In Enmity & war first weakened then in stern repentance
They must renew their brightness & their disorganized functions
Again reorganize till they resume the image of the human
Cooperating in the bliss of Man Obeying his Will
Servants to the Infinite & Eternal of the Human form¹¹⁰

For this section must now be read as Urizen rewriting the aims of Tharmas' original goal of spiritual purity through immersion in matter and instead, separating the divine or transcendental from the human or changeable for ever. For though the divine is called servant of the human it is actually the master. This sleight of hand is brought about by allowing the Eternal and unchangeable to change to fit in with the changes in the human or perceived, while still retaining its stable status as divine or ideal in the face of the main argument against its possibly being divine or stable - which is that it must not change if it is to be eternal. Thus spiritual purity appears to be redefined as constantly changing while it remains always separated from the material world, and having its own ineffable nature. Metaphysics therefore remains open, and at the same time Urizen secures his role for ever, for he can never be proved wrong in the sceptical view of the world - when wrong he changes his reasons, but the status of reasons remain superior to the status of perceptions.

With this, Urizen has begun to align himself with Thomas Taylor who claims a transcendental status for intelligible objects:

But it is obvious to everyone that the power of Intellect is different from the power of sense: that which is sensible, therefore is one thing, and that which is intelligible is another. And as Intellect is superior to sense, so is

the intelligible more excellent than that which is sensible — That which is sensible has an existence; and by a much greater reason, therefore, that which is intelligible must have a real subsistence. But intelligible is a certain universal species: for universal reason is always the object of intelligence ¹¹¹

And thus all the arguments of Hume may be taken to fall into the framework of the Greek tradition of formal realism, by which, although changeable, the realm of the intellect is taken to be more real than the realm of physical things. For:

Prior to this essence [the irrational soul which mingles with the body] we see a certain form separate from a subject, and converted to itself such as is the rational nature. Our soul therefore presides over its proper energies and corrects itself. This would however not be the case unless it was converted into itself, and would not be converted into itself unless it had a separate essence. It is not therefore indigent of the subordinate ¹¹²

And this rational soul, which is unindigent of the irrational soul and the body, is the status which Urizen claims for his own. Thus, just as the demand for spiritual purification of Los demanded the death of the body, so the demand for knowledge of the truth requires the death of the self for the its attainment.

And with this apotheosis of Urizen we have come full circle in the poem. For after the joint apocalypse of Los and Urizen, following the coming of Urizen under Los's sway ¹¹³, Urizen has reorganized his empiricism until it absolutely resembles the structure of Los's prophecy. Both have set themselves up as victims to the living for the purpose of their own eternal survival, and have thus both made the living victim to them. Each has done this by creating a transcendental final truth in the face of the problems thrown up by the other

along the steps each has taken. In the case of Los and Enitharmon, this truth is only to be reached after death and takes the form of the woven body of Jerusalem which stands for the spiritual embodiment of all those who died. In the case of Urizen, the final truth might only be reached if it were possible for there to be a return to "brightness" undergone by the gods if they cease to be consonant with "The Human form Divine". For both partake of the idea of the Last Judgement (particularly Urizen who used the words of the Revelation on Page 123, discussed above), which is that there must be a once and for all truth. Although Blake's poem has shown how this idea was not discovered but created by each for their own gain - of eternal life for reason and prophecy.

Both may now continue together to the fulfilment of "sweet Science" which is no fulfilment at all but a return to the Eternal Man's comprehension of the earthly cycle of sowing and harvest of the corn from "the stores of Urizen"¹¹⁴ as necessary for further purifications in "intellectual war"¹¹⁵ before salvation held at a distance. Therefore it seems prophecy has vanished in the certainty that fulfilment will come - at some future time.

Thus where we began with St. John adding Platonism to Christianity as "wickedness in high places", which resulted in the setting up of Los as the prophet of deferred salvation, we have ended up with Urizen in effect reading Plato - in which salvation should be possible - and finding Johannine Christianity with its deferred salvation in it. And thus we may end our reading of *The Four Zoas* with the quote from Thomas Taylor with which we began:

Let not the reader ... be surprised at the solitariness of the paths through which I shall attempt to conduct him, or at the novelty of the objects which will present themselves in the journey; for perhaps he may fortunately recollect that he has travelled the same road before; that the

scenes were once familiar to him, and that the country through which he is passing is his native land

But now we can read this passage in a new perspective, for, it no longer miraculously demonstrates the Oneness of God in showing to Plato and the Hebrew and Christian prophets the same transcendental truth. Instead, we may now read how the buried Platonism in St. John's gospel was unearthed by Thomas Taylor. And in the light of this, *The Four Zoas* may be read as how William Blake at first accepted the miracle, and then, after reading the Greek Bible and Platonic dialogues, rejected it.

Notes:

- 1 - See Bloom in E 962.
- 2 - FZ Page 99, ll. 1-3.
- 3 - See the end of Chapter 7.
- 4 - FZ Page 99, ll. 4 - 14 as well as 5 lines describing the same vision written and erased in the margin.
- 5 - Ibid. ll. 19-21.
- 6 - Ibid, ll. 25-26.
- 7 - FZ Page 100, line 1.
- 8 - Ibid. ll. 7-8.
- 9 - FZ Page 22, line 38.
- 10 - FZ Page 100, ll. 8-16. [*My italics*].
- 11 - Ibid. ll. 2-4.
- 12 - Urizen was separated into his sons and his shadow drawn away by Los and Enitharmon at FZ Page 98, ll. 50-68, and re-emerges whole at FZ Page 101, line 1.
- 13 - FZ Page 101, ll. 5-7.
- 14 - Ibid. line 26.
- 15 - See FZ Page 101, ll. 15-21.
- 16 - FZ Page 100, ll. 27-31.
- 17 - FZ Page 100, line 34.
- 18 - FZ Page 100, line 41.
- 19 - FZ Page 101, line 47 - FZ Page 102, line 1.
- 20 - FZ Page 102, ll. 13-15.
- 21 - FZ Page 102, line 23 - FZ Page 103, line 32.
- 22 - FZ Page 104, line 6.
- 23 - FZ Page 104, line 11.

- 24 - FZ Page 104, line 13.
- 25 - FZ Page 113, line 26.
- 26 - FZ Page 109, line 5.
- 27 - Ibid. line 15.
- 28 - Ibid. line 18. This phrase was used by Leibniz and lampooned by Voltaire.
- 29 - Ibid. ll. 16 -17.
- 30 - FZ Page 110, line 2.
- 31 - Red is the colour of prostitutes clothes in Jewish tradition
- 32 - FZ Page 113, line 48 - FZ Page 108, line 2.
- 33 - The whore of Babylon who returns in the Revelation of St.John.
- 34 - FZ Page 106, line 18-19.
- 35 - Ibid. line 24.
- 36 - FZ Page 111, ll. 17-20.
- 37 - MHH plate 11.
- 38 - FZ Page 111, ll. 21-38.
- 39 - FZ Page 112, ll. 1-3.
- 40 - FZ Page 112, ll. 8-22.
- 41 - FZ Page 113, ll. 1-11.
- 42 - FZ Page 114, line 1.
- 43 - FZ Page 4, line 4.
- 44 - FZ Page 114, ll. 12-14.
- 45 - FZ Page 114, line 19.
- 46 - From his paper "William Blake" discussed in Chapter 1 above.
- 47 - FZ Page 114, line 20.
- 48 - Ibid. line 28.
- 49 - FZ Page 115, line 1.
- 50 - Ibid. lines 1-3.

- 51 - Ibid. lines 4-5.
- 52 - Ibid. line 5.
- 53 - Ibid. ll. 53 - 56.
- 54 - Ibid. line 22.
- 55 - Ibid. ll. 19-20.
- 56 - Ibid. line 24.
- 57 - FZ Page 117, ll. 1-5.
- 58 - See the end of Night VIIa, and the argument in Chapter 10 above.
- 59 - FZ Page 110, ll. 1-16.
- 60 - See the argument in chapter 10 above.
- 61 - See VIIb, FZ Page 92, ll. 13-15, and the discussion in Chapter 10 above.
- 62 - See FZ Page 110, line 2, and the discussion above in this chapter.
- 63 - See the argument about FZ Pages 97 & 98 in Chapter 10 above.
- 64 - FZ Page 115, line 22.
- 65 - FZ Page 117, line 17.
- 66 - FZ Page 119, line 24.
- 67 - FZ Page 118, line 3.
- 68 - In a line added to FZ Page 118. Erdman places the line at the beginning of the section which deals with Urizen's books unrolling, but we would suggest that it should come at the end of the section about Los's apocalypse.
- 69 - FZ Page 118, line 5.
- 70 - See our arguments in the discussion of Night VIIb above.
- 71 - FZ Page 118, line 17.
- 72 - Blake did know of the philosophy of Berkeley, and wrote of "casting it off" in *Milton*. Also, Deism is usually seen as exemplifying the post-Newtonian era; the human intellect, now come of age and aware of its own powers, no longer in need

of any assistance in demonstrating the existence of an originator of the whole scheme of things. (From *The Pan Dictionary of Philosophy*.

73 - FZ Page 119, line 1.

74 - Here we are reminded of Foucault's suggestions about the control of information flow through sexual control in his *Volonté de Savoir*.

75 - FZ Page 119, ll. 19-20.

76 - These are both repeated on FZ Page 119, line 21.

77 - FZ Page 119, line 23.

78 - FZ Page 120, line 4. The use of the word Mystery dates this addition to the alterations of Night VIII and the new beginning of Night IX, as the word is not used except in additions in this night.

79 - FZ Page 119, ll. 33-34.

80 - FZ Page 120, line 5.

81 - Ibid. line 30; another added line.

82 - Ibid. ll. 21-22.

83 - Ibid. line 23.

84 - Ibid, line 40.

85 - See FZ Page 122, from line 21.

86 - FZ Page 120, ll. 46-51.

87 - FZ Page 121, line 3.

88 - Ibid. line 23.

89 - Ibid. ll. 35-38.

90 - Ibid. ll. 40-42, (*My italics*).

91 - See Chapter 9 above.

92 - FZ Page 122, ll. 21-24.

93 - Ibid. line 26.

94 - FZ Page 123, line 23.

95 - Ibid. II. 30-32.

96 - David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Edinburgh, 1748).

97 - FZ Page 123, II. 35-38. Bloom points to the sources of these images as Revelation 4. 1-6.

98 - E 965.

99 - FZ Page 124, line 3.

100 - FZ Page 125, II. 6-7.

101 - Ibid. line 9.

102 - There is another point here, for where Berkeley's idealism is rejected because there was no place to set his "feet", in Hume's idealism, perceptions are sown from the hand as supposedly avoiding the trap of resting on a stable ground.

103 - opp. cit. II. 15-16.

104 - FZ Page 126, line 27. This is also an addition to the text.

105 - FZ Page 125, II. 26-35.

106 - Ibid. line 26.

107 - Ibid. line 39.

108 - FZ Page 126, line 1.

109 - Ibid. line 8.

110 - Ibid. II. 9-18.

111 - CWP, III, p. 6.

112 - CWP, I, p. xi.

113 - At the end of Villa: Startled was Los he found his Enemy Urizen now/ In his hands.

114 - FZ Page 138, line 1.

115 - FZ Page 139, line 9.

Chapter 12 - A History of *The Four Zoas*.

If we are to accept the present reading of *The Four Zoas* as evidence of a progression in Blake's writing from the revolutionary Lambeth Prophecies to the Neoplatonism of *Vala* followed by a reworking of these ideas into some new philosophy of Blake's own devising, we must find evidence of these changes elsewhere in Blake's life as well as evidence of Blake's new philosophy in his later work. We have already made references to Blake's philosophical position in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, so will begin with a look at the evidence of the records of Blake's life which appear to support this claim of a philosophical development.

We argued above¹ that Blake's dating of his poems was symbolic rather than accurate to the time of writing, and particularly symbolic in the case of the 1804 dating of both *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Consonant with our argument about Blake's relationship with Neoplatonism, this same year was the date for Letter 51² in which Blake criticizes Greek philosophy and theology for the first time:

O Glory! O Delight! I have entirely reduced that spectrous Fiend to his station, whose annoyance has been the ruin of my labour for the passed twenty years of my life. He is the enemy of conjugal love and is the Jupiter of the Greeks, an iron-handed tyrant, the ruler of ancient Greece

The letter goes on, telling of Blake's great mental change:

Suddenly, on the day after visiting the Truchsessian Gallery of pictures. I was again enlightened with the light I enjoyed in my youth, and which has for exactly twenty years been closed from me as by a door and by window shutters

This cannot be accounted for by his having been acquitted of the charges brought against him by Scholfield, for the trial was on the 11th of January that year and the letter dated the 23rd of October. Nor would it seem persuasive that the change had something to do with the pictures he had seen in the Truchsessian Gallery, for if it had something to do with the renewal of the idea of gothic representation as Jack Lindsay suggests³ it would seem more likely that he would have been enlightened in the gallery rather than on the day after the visit. The visit to the gallery seems no more than an *aide mémoire* to the date of the sea change in Blake's mental state. Whether something happened or was said while he was at the gallery, when reflected upon, brought about the change cannot be certain, but the reference to twenty years of shuttered existence appears to be deliberately accurate⁴.

Erdman suggests that these years were ushered in by the failure of the print shop Blake had opened with Parker in 1784⁵. This would seem to be indubitable as part of the reason for Blake's "lost" years, but the tone of the letter of 1804 seems to suggest that the twenty years were not lived through knowingly as a time of pain, but were rather the result of some unknowing blindness which was suddenly removed. The idea that this twenty year period marked Blake's association with Neoplatonism is expressed by George Mills Harper in his *Neoplatonism of William Blake* which we discussed in Chapter 4, and rests upon the argument that Blake heard Thomas Taylor give his twelve Platonic lectures at Flaxman's house in 1784, and rejected Taylor's form of Platonism after the incident in the Truchsessian gallery. In our earlier discussion we argued against Harper's conclusion that Blake was so imbued with Platonic ideals that he never completely shook them off, and here, we shall argue further that Blake's move away from Taylorian Platonism was a radical one, although Harper's position could be seen to be tenable because of the metaphysics of Blake's Contrary.

The earliest date we can be certain that Blake was interested in Greek art is that of his first letter to Trusler of the 16th of August 1799, in which he writes in defence of his drawings:

I have found that my style of Designing is a Species by itself & in this which I send you have been compell'd by my Genius or Angel to follow where he lead - If I were to act otherwise it would not fulfill the purpose for which alone I live which is in conjunction with such men as my friend Cumberland to renew the lost art of the Greeks⁶

This use of the name of his friend Cumberland derives from the fact that Cumberland, who was a neighbour of Trusler's in south west London⁷, had recommended Blake to make designs representing the seven deadly sins. In Blake's letter to Cumberland of the 26th of August 1799, telling his friend of the failure of the commission he writes:

I ought long ago to have written to thank you for your kind recommendation to Dr Trusler⁸

How long before completion of the pictures for Trusler the commission had been given cannot be certain, but the assiduity with which Cumberland kept his letters⁹ suggests that a written commission was unlikely to have been lost, so that it might have been as early as 1795 or 1796, during which time Blake was to make plates for one of Cumberland's own books¹⁰.

The book in question was Cumberland's *Thoughts on Outline, Sculpture, And the system that Guided the ancient Artists in composing their Figures and Groupes*, which was published privately by Wilson of Doctors Commons and dated 1796. This however, must have been the projected date of release of the book, for when on some date before the 16th of October 1799¹¹ Thomas Taylor

was sent two books by Cumberland - *The Captive of the Castle of Sanaar*, and *Some Anecdotes of the Life of Julio Bonsoni* - Taylor writes that he is looking forward to the receipt of *Thoughts on Outline* at a later date. The delay may be accounted for by Blake's usual tardiness of response, but we may also be a little more accurate, for in his first letter to Cumberland of the 6th December 1795, Blake mentions that he:

has not been able to send the proof of the bath tho I have done the corrections my paper not being in order.¹²

The bath appears to refer to the etching *Psyche Disobeys*, Number 12 in the plates accompanying the *Thoughts on Outline* in which Psyche sees Cupid lying asleep in a bath. This, and Number 13, *Psyche Repents*, both stand out from the rest of the etchings as they both have a background, whereas the rest of the plates are all simple outlines. Of the rest of the plates, Blake etched a further six to the author's designs, which must refer to the "6 plates which you desired me to get made for you" in Blake's second letter to Cumberland on the 23rd December 1796. We might suggest that because of his forgetting the plates, which:

laid on my shelf without speaking to tell me whose they were or that they were at all & it was some time (when I found them) before I could divine whence they came or whither they were bound.¹³

Blake either forgot the subjects he was to design, or finished the engravings as though they were ordinary book plates. This latter would have been against Cumberland's intention for his book, which was to rail against the artistic temperament of his times:

when he who can cut the clearest stroke on a copper plate, or dot out
the finest shadow, and not he who makes the purest outline, is
esteemed the best engraver.¹⁴

Although this idea of Blake's mistake is pure conjecture, all eight plates are
signed and dated:

from an original design by G. Cumberland Engrd by W Blake published
as the Act directs Nov 5 1794

However, this date is certainly inaccurate with respect to the date of the book's
publishing since the final six were not returned to Cumberland until after the end
of 1796. There may also have been other problems to have delayed the release of
Thoughts on Outline, in particular the fineness of line in certain of the plates¹⁵, so
that it was not completed until after the other two books were sent to Taylor as
part of Cumberland's scheme to curtail the movement of Art away from classical
lines. This plan was to set up by subscription, a drawing gallery of originals and
plasters of Greek and Roman marbles and bas reliefs to which young artists could
go to learn proper art, as Cumberland thought that:

the current of fine art still flows in wild, uncircumscribed, and irregular
channels, far from the pure line of sober rectitude, and flourishing
improvement.¹⁶

This then was likely to be the renewal of the art of the Greeks to which Blake was
referring when he wrote to Trusler, rather than any definite Platonism, and was
likely to have been fresh in his mind because of the delay in the publication of
Thoughts on Outline.

And it was with this view of Greek art that the other two books were sent to Taylor, who was at the time an assistant secretary to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce,¹⁷ with the hope that his society would subscribe to the planned gallery. However, the Platonist was very evasive in his reply¹⁸, and without offering money, admonishes the author for defending "lasciviousness publicly" in his novel, and expounds his Platonism which treats love as "true only in proportion as it is pure; or in other words in proportion as it rises above our brutal part." This letter concludes with a further admonishment from Taylor who:

wishes you & your Partner (to whom I beg my respects) all the joys of reason with no more of the pleasures of the senses than are necessary to the possession of the *true* good.

Since this section of the letter refers to *Thoughts on Outline*, Blake must be the partner to whom Taylor refers¹⁹. And since Blake had written only eight weeks earlier that he wanted to "renew the lost art of the Greeks", it would seem likely that he might have been excited by the letter to Cumberland and read further in Taylor's work as soon after that time as possible. Thus we would suggest that even if Blake did go to Taylor's lectures in 1784, he probably did not read any of Taylor's translations until after this time²⁰. This would map on to our reading of *The Four Zoas* as having had an initial core of the Lambeth Prophecy type²¹ (dated 1797), to which the first additions were made to transform the poem into a Neoplatonic epic some time around 1799 and before 1804.

This epic could perhaps be that to which Blake refers in resounding Neoplatonic tones in his letter to Butts of the 25th April 1803:

But none can know the Spiritual Acts of my three years Slumber on the banks of the Ocean unless he has seen them in the Spirit or unless he should read My long Poem descriptive of those Acts for I have in these three years composed an Immense number of verses on One Grand Theme Similar to Homers Iliad or Miltons Paradise Lost the Persons and Machinery Intirely new to the Inhabitants of Earth (some of the Persons Excepted) ... I mention this to shew you what I think the Grand Reason of my being brought down here²²

This singleness of theme, and grandiosity of reason are both goals of Taylor's Platonism, as is the fact that Blake's poem is described as an Allegory:

addressed to the Intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal understanding [which is] somewhat in the same manner defined by Plato²³

Further, with this declaration, the first additions which make up *Vala* fit in with the sort of Platonism which Taylor expressed in his notes to the 1793 edition of the four dialogues.²⁴

Whereas Harper read Taylor's Neoplatonism as a seamless whole, in fact the introductions and notes Taylor gave to the first four published dialogues are completely different from those he gave to the *Complete Works of Plato* of 1804. In Chapter 7 we saw how Taylor conflated his form of Platonism with Protestantism, but this was a new reading for the later edition. In the earlier work Blake would have read of a philosophical system which was unalloyed with State Christianity; rather he would have read passages much more to his taste, for example:

Such indeed is the unparalleled excellence of Plato's composition, that notwithstanding all the artifice of the style, almost every word has a

peculiar signification and contains some latent philosophical truth; so that at the same time it both gives elegance to the structure, and becomes necessary to the full meaning of the sentence with which it is connected 25

This comment about Plato's work well accords with the unreconstructed, post-revelatory, empirical view of the world into which we saw Blake's philosophy develop in our reading of *The Four Zoas*. For the first time, Blake could read the work of a philosopher who seemed to have the same reverence he had for words. Where Blake set his simple verses amid pictures to show how beautiful simple words could be on their own and that there was no need for verbosity, here was a philosopher whose every word, it was claimed, was valued in just the same way.

And further, in the introduction to the *Parmenides*, Blake could read of the dialectic of Plato which the reader:

must not suppose . . . is the same with vulgar dialectic, which is conversant with opinion, and is accurately investigated in Aristotle's topics: for the business of this first of sciences, which at present is utterly unknown, is to employ definitions, divisions, analyzations, and demonstrations, as primary sciences in the investigation of causes, imitating the progressions of beings from the first principle of things, and their continual conversion of it, as the ultimate object of desire 26

Here we have an accord with the notebook poem discussed above, where Blake praised Newton for doubting things unless proved by experiment and criticized Reason for dreaming that Life could be understood in "clear streams"²⁷. But most of all, we can make out much of the action of the first four Nights of *The Four Zoas* in a long passage quoted by Taylor from Proclus:

But there are three energies of this most scientific method: the first of which is adapted to youth, and is useful for the purpose of rousing their intellect, which is in a dormant state for it is a true exercise of the eye of the soul in the separation of things, leading forth through opposite positions the essential impression of reasons which it contains; and considering not only the divine path, as it were, which conducts to truth, but exploring whether the deviations from it contain any thing worthy of belief, and lastly, stimulating the all-various conceptions of the soul. But the second energy takes place when intellect rests from its former investigations as becoming most familiar with the speculations of beings, and beholds truth itself firmly established upon pure and holy foundation. And this energy, according to Socrates, by a progression through ideas, evolves the whole of an intelligible nature, till it arrives at that which is first: and this by analysing, defining, demonstrating and dividing, proceeding upwards and downwards, till, having entirely investigated the nature of intelligibles, it raises itself to a nature superior to beings. But the soul being perfectly established in its nature, as in her paternal port, no longer tends to a more excellent object of desire, as she has now arrived at the end of her search: and you may say that what is delivered in the *Phaedrus* & *Sophista* is the employment of this energy, giving a twofold division to some, and a fourfold to other oppositions of the dialectic art; and on this account is assigned to such as philosophize purely, and no longer require preparatory exercise, but nourish the intellect of their soul in pure intellection. But the third energy, which is exhibitiv according to truth, purifies from twofold ignorance when its reasons are employed upon men full of opinion, and this is spoken of in the *Sophista*.²⁸

In this passage, we can see the triple energy of the dialectic exists as four separate parts: truth, opinion formed of ignorance, and the double headed searching which awakes the intellect that is:

obstetric but does not confute; and is explorative, but not defensive.²⁹

Quite similar to the Contrary this energy of youth is not oppositional, and therefore cannot support a fixed framework of truth and non-truth. And as such it is like the desire for knowledge which marks the interchange between Tharmas³⁰ and Enion that sets off the whole poem: this first energy which "imitates the Paternal cause of the universality of things"³¹ (which thus predicts the Grand Reason for all things) as in the cut and thrust of the first dialogue between Socrates and Parmenides.

This energy once set in motion is followed by rest from former investigation, as when "Urizen sleeps in the porch"³² freeing Luvah and Vala to leave the heart and enter the brain, enthroning desire for their reuniting in purity as the highest principle³³. Thus, the poem *Vala* continues with the account of Urizen's progress upwards and downwards to attempt to arrive at that which is first - i.e. "the soul in her paternal port" - by analysing, defining, demonstrating and dividing. And this work is set against the energy of the prophetic world of Los which purifies from twofold ignorance, which is the gleaning of truth from the uncertainty of the present and future tenses.

Set against this gleeful uptake of Neoplatonism by Blake after the 1799 letter from Taylor is the publication of Taylor's *Complete Works of Plato* in the same year as Blake's denouncing of Jupiter as "the enemy of conjugal love". Our reading of *The Four Zoas* has already discussed the implications of Taylor's Christianizing of Plato according to Blake, but we may find other evidence of Blake's rejection of Taylor's Platonism in his illustrations of Blair's Grave.

Three of these designs³⁴, published in 1808 (certainly designed before 1805³⁵, and almost certainly after Blake's return from Felpham in late 1803 and the trial in January 1804³⁶), represent the moment of death, with the soul and body separating. And each design represents the soul as having corporeal form. This is absolutely forbidden by Taylor's view of that which no longer depends

upon time for the perfection of its being. In the 1793 introduction to the *Parmenides*, he writes:

Time is essentially and intimately united with the natures which it measures, that their being, such as it is depends on the existence of time. But time, as is evident, is perpetually flowing, and this in the most rapid manner imagination can conceive. It is evident, therefore, that the natures to which it is essential, must subsist in a manner equally transitory and flowing.³⁷

Thus, where Blake portrays the soul as having a corporeal structure, he is tying it to time, whereas Taylor claims that although the soul:

suffers a remission of intellectual union from its connection with the discursive energies of the soul.³⁸

this lack is filled by:

a certain first intellect, in itself entire and perfectly complete, in which the first and most true species of all things are contained, and which have a subsistence independent of time, place and motion. And this first intellect is no other than that vital nature - *autozoon*.³⁹

For Taylor, there could not therefore be a portrayal of the soul, let alone an assignment of corporeal form to it, as in Platonic terms, a representation is three times removed from the ideal, the corporeal twice removed from the ideal, whereas the soul was the closest thing to it and therefore not governed by time.

At this point we may return to Harper's conviction that Blake did not discard Platonism entirely after 1804. In terms of the Contrary there are no negations, and to negate Platonism would be to be Platonic, would be to set up

the Contrary as right and Platonism as wrong. Thus we enter the realms of Blake's ambiguity, for, as Taylor suggested that the *Autozoon* was Jesus⁴⁰ (in the notes to the earlier translation) Blake uses the figure of Jesus as the centrepiece of his representations of the Last Judgement⁴¹. In these, the souls of the departed circle around the central figure, descending into Hell at his left hand and ascending to Heaven at his right in a continual cycle. In this way, the figure of Jesus is taken to be the "Oneness of forms", but in the Hebraic way of God creating man in his own image, which Platonism prohibits, as such corporealization is a temporalizing of the eternal. Thus, Blake's designs are both Platonic and anti-Platonic, in the same way as Plato takes both positions for and against himself in his inclusion of the *Parmenides* in his canon, and in the corporeality of spirits being cleansed in the Myth of Er. And it is this same ambiguity which we find in Blake's later poems.

To squeeze Blake's greatest masterpieces in as a sort of footnote to the present work must seem somewhat of a space-saving device. But, for want of space we must contain the discussion by considering a single paper on *Milton* by Irene Taylor: "Say First! What Mov'd Blake"⁴². And in particular we shall consider her explanation of the Lark, the Wild Thyme and the millennium. Her reading of these elements of Blake's poem descends from her contention that Blake is "brother prophet" to Milton the poet in the struggle against the evil of Satan, which may be seen to be problematic within the economy of the Contrary.

The expansion of the brotherhood between Blake and Milton within the economy of the Contrary complicates the relationship between Blake and Milton. For, rather than a relation between simples, we must also take into account the contrariety between Milton the "poet" (Milton-T) and Milton the "poem" (Milton-M). This is because when Blake invokes Milton, and when Milton speaks in the lines

of the poem, it is not possible be certain which designation of the term "Milton" is correct. However, considering Blake's own criticism of the negative, we can be certain that whatever the most appropriate designation, it is never purely one of the possible designations of the Milton Contrary.

To give an example of the economy of the functioning of the Contrary in the use of the designation "Milton", the best place to look would seem to be the entrance of "Milton" into Blake on Plate 15 of the poem:

First Milton saw Albion of the rock of ages.
Deadly pale outstretched and snowy cold, storm covered
A Giant form of perfect beauty outstretched on the rock
In solemn death. The Sea of Time and Space thundered aloud
Against the rock, which was inwrapped with weeds of death.
Hovering over the cold bosom, In its vortex Milton bent down
To the bosom of death. What was underneath soon seem'd above
A cloudy heaven mingled with stormy seas in loudest ruin;
But as a wintry globe descends precipitant thro' Beulah bursting,
With thunders loud, and terrible so Milton's shadow fell,
Precipitant loud thundring into the Seas of Time & Space

Then first I saw in the Zenith as a falling star.
Descending perpendicular, swift as the swallow or swift:
And on my left foot falling on the tarsus, enter'd there;
But from my left foot a black cloud redounding spread over Europe.

If we make an exegesis of this section in terms of Milton-T, we read of the poet seeing the dead Albion, a victim of necrological philosophy which reduces things to a narrow "Furrow" of time and space, and believing this to be the truth about the world. Referring to the famous preceding description of the nature of infinity, the trap into which Milton-T falls derives from his perceiving the vortex of the dead Albion "roll backward behind/ His path, into a globe itself infolding;"⁴³ He

mistakes the philosophically determined world of "globes" for the infinite world of heaven, and as such: "What was underneath soon seemed above."

This Milton-T perceived world suggests Russell's demonstrative⁴⁴, where an object is defined in a denotation that is bound up in its being isolated in the time and space of its perceiving. The perceiver carries on along his own wondrous vortical journey on the earth, aware of his own historical self, but reduces *everything* else to being part of that history and lacking a history of its own:

...the eye of man views both east & west encompassing
Its vortex: and the north & south, with all their starry host:
Also the rising sun & setting moon he views surrounding
His corn fields 45

Perception reduces *everything* out of its own individual infinite history into the propriety of human experience. This is the case of the rationalist, Descartes⁴⁶ (from whom the notion of vortices is derived), as well as that of the empiricists Locke and Hume; and derives from the varying relationships each philosopher draws up between the radically separated perceiver and perceived, subject and object.

It is this separation that we have seen that the revealed religion of Blake criticizes most strongly, for if the Judaic law is fulfilled and the salvation of the world accomplished, there is no need for a writer of religious epic to succumb to these strictures that call themselves philosophical rigour. By applying the structures of philosophy to his poetry, Milton-T has fallen from the Eden of direct understanding into the death of philosophical time and space which is the infinitely unfulfilled perception of Ulro.

Milton-T's fall is perpendicular into Blake's left foot. This fall of swallow or swift echoes the Pentecost, but rather than entering Blake's spirit, it enters his foot. Here the relationship seems to be a pun on poetic metre, and a cursory examination of *Europe - A Prophecy* shows it to be more Miltonic in metre than the later Blake⁴⁷. Furthermore, *Europe* is designated as a prophecy, which is no longer the case in the later work. Thus we can see that in following Milton-T, Blake realises that his own prophecy *Europe* makes the same mistake, and falls under the aegis of the black cloud of the puritanical demands required to eradicate evil in order that truth may be revealed at a later date.

But the reading of this fall of Milton-T into Blake's poetry does not take into account the irreducibility of Milton-T to an integral object in the face of the notion of the vortex. In the next few lines we can see that Milton-T cannot be separated from his wives and daughters. He was an historical man "on earth in his bright pilgrimage of sixty years"⁴⁸. Therefore, a reading in respect to Milton-T as nothing more than poet does not saturate the possibilities of this section of Milton-M. And then there is the act of writing a poem: the poet (Milton-T or Blake) only finds himself, only realises himself as a poet through his work, the production of poems. For it was not Milton-T, but Milton-T's poems as read entering Blake the poet's vortex which produced Milton-M. Thus, too, as Blake finds himself in the writing of Milton-M, the poem itself spins off in its own vortex, for the poet's productions also have their own histories, their vortices.

To read Blake's poem on this limb of the Contrary, we can readily make the same initial move of reading Milton-M as a contemplation of the dead Albion. But in this case there is a change of relation of the word "its" in line 40 of plate 15:

Hovering over the cold bosom, in its vortex Milton bent down

Whereas in reading Milton-T, "its" necessarily referred the vortex to the cold bosom of Albion, reading Milton-M, "its" may also refer the vortex to the poem "Milton".

In this case, the drama of the section is the problem of poetry itself. Once written, the poem (any poem) seems to lose its infinite life and become an integral thing. An object which can be examined and criticized, treated by readers as something to reduce into their property, their "corn-field". Here, the poem falls from the Zenith of imagination to the black cloud of Blake's foot - his metre, his rhyme scheme - the endless object of study of the Human Scientists.

But for Milton-M, the "pilgrimage of sixty years" is poetry's salvation - its having been read by some other person. If read, the revelation it preaches leads directly to its opening the "Three Heavens of Beulah", and its not being tied to the narrow furrow of time and space which would hold it in the thrall of prophecy of things to come. It does not concern the reader, salvation comes in this way to the poem and to all literature, including Milton-T's.

Thus we can see that Tayler cannot uphold the simple move of accrediting Blake with assisting Milton "engage in spiritual warfare against the Satanic Urizen". Blake both reviles Milton's work as fallen into the scientific furrow of space and time, and praises its status as being revealed beyond the looking forward to salvation at which Milton leaves us in *Paradise Regained*. As well as this we can see the simple relation between the poets is impossible because of the dynamic relationship between Milton-T/Milton-M and the historical Blake, which we read of in our own histories. Whereas Tayler stabilizes these as elements in her consideration of prophecy of the uncertain future given to those who are good, which is the "when" of the millennium, we must consider them vortically in the "now" of unfolding revelation.

Taylor's reading is globular rather than vortical. Still waiting for the millennium, she is the inheritor of Los, who:

— labour at his resolute Anvil
Among indefinite Druid rocks & snows of doubt and reasoning
Refusing all Definite Form, the Abstract Horror roof'd, stony hard.
49

she is the inheritor of hard headed abstract reasoning which is the owner of a personal 'corn-field', the progenitor of globes from vortices. For, where reason is the "first Age" of 'dismal woe', at the "second Age":

Down sunk with fright a red round Globe hot burning; deep
Deep down into the Abyss: panting, conglobing, trembling.⁵⁰

This is the globe of blood which, entering the Abyss between subject and object (which is the product of reason through the primacy of perception), is the abstraction of life itself from its historical vortex. This precedes the abstracting of the five senses (Milton-M pl.3 ll.12-end) that completes the opening of metaphysics which is promised - prophesied - closed at the millennium, in the ultimately deferred return to Eden.

To follow the path of reason is to follow "Milton's track"⁵¹ which leads between law and passion, whose interplay is Satan, to Adam. Reason is an attempt to return to the closure of metaphysics and fulfil perception with truth: law must curb passion in order that temptations towards falsehood (which are Satan) can be avoided and Paradise be regained. And industriously following Milton's track of self denial in the fight against the temptations of Satan, one can believe that one sees "the Lord on the clouds of Ololon."⁵² This is the 'Moment in

each day that Satan cannot find" ⁵³, which the industrious multiply, judging the deeds done at that moment to be good, in their attempt to eradicate evil on their journey towards Adam in the futural Eden.

But herein lies the insoluble problem of reason which Blake criticizes most strongly. To return to the Bible, in the sermon on the mount, Jesus says:

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished ⁵⁴

This retains the economy of prophecy. It suggests that there is a time which will come "when heaven and earth pass away", which is the time when the law will be accomplished; but it also says that Jesus was the time of fulfilment. Later in the same sermon, Jesus says:

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get ⁵⁵

This is a dramatization of the problem of the "absolutely true", the "moment in the day which Satan cannot find". To know it, one must judge it against all other moments or truths, but this is not possible within the economy of prophecy. The always futural Eden, promised to the followers of truth, cannot be known unless it has been revealed already. Thus, to follow the prophetic way one must have models to work from, which Milton produces in the character of Jesus in *Paradise Regained*, but any diversity in the understanding of that model necessitates further judgement. Herein lies the problem. To have an adjudged "absolutely true"

- in Milton's case, Jesus - necessitates the judging other things - to deduce whether they do or do not fit that standard. Even the question as to whether the state of perfection of Jesus has or has not been reached must itself also be judged. Therefore, the method of judgement by absolute standards extends the time of fulfilment indefinitely because in allowing judgement to predominate, it opens up an infinite regression and progression of checking as to what is absolutely true.⁵⁶

Blake directly confronts the problem of judgement, and while pointing out that it is only one way of looking at things, opens up a Contrary way of understanding the world directly which allows for variation in subjectivity:

Just in this Moment when the morning odours rise abroad.
And first from the Wild Thyme, stands a Fountain In a rock
Of crystal flowing into two streams, one flows thro Golgonooza
And thro Beulah to Eden beneath Los's western Wall:
The other flows thro the Aerial void & all the Churches
Meeting again In Golgonooza beyond Satan's seat.

To criticize reason as wrong would be to negate it, so Blake's method is to position his ideas as Contrary to reason. The fountain of truth either flows directly to Eden, avoiding Los's prophetic infinity; or it flows in a circle in the churches of Golgonooza, judging itself so carefully that, in avoiding Satan, it cannot be certain what really is truth.

What is interesting in Tayler's reading of the "Moment", is that although she recognises the combination of the sexes which is the Contrary, she still regards Satan as significant of Evil which must be eradicated. Looking for globes rather than vortices, she suggests that Blake is the prophet of sexual love, and lumbers

him with the single notion that if this one area of human life were judged properly, the whole of human existence would be more able to eradicate Satan.

For this reason, she reads the Wild Thyme and Lark to be evil to the inhabitants of Ulro because of her reading of the separations of the sexes and their relation to death. They are messengers of Los the prophet, and are mistaken for harbingers of sexual profligacy. But this completely disregards the exposition of the lark at the beginning of plate 36 which Tayler skips to concentrate on the vision of the angel which she uses to support her account of the virgin's acceptance of sexual maturity in Milton's *Comus*.

If we explore this section on the lark a little, we will find that it continues the profound criticism of Milton (T & M), reason and prophetic writing. Where the fountain runs both ways, the lark mounts to a crystal gate and meets another. For one:

It is the entrance of the First Heaven named Luther: for
The Lark is Los's Messenger thro the Twenty-seven Churches
That the Seven Eyes of God, who walk even to Satan's Seat
Thro all the Twenty-seven Heavens, may not slumber nor sleep

This Lark is the message that prophecy is fulfilled in the ever open eyes of God, even in a world where there is evil. It nests at Los's gate, announcing fulfilment that is the way out of the economy of prophecy. Just as the other Lark, it flies from earth to heaven and back again, but this Lark is a mighty angel to Immortals, whereas the other Lark is the prophetic flash which the Mortal Blake must go beyond in order to escape the infinite abyss of prophecy and reach the vortical.

We read of the actions of the other Lark, above a bland little picture of the Virgin Ololon appearing to Blake in front of Blake's cottage in Felpham, where he wrote much of *The Four Zoas*. But as we have seen in the reading of that poem,

Blake discovered instead of certainty in Prophecy, the difficulties inherent in the economy of prophecy. The vision of the Virgin is the 'Moment in the day which Satan cannot find' which as prophet, he would have been meant to write down, but it is a mistake. For Blake addresses Ololon as a daughter of Beulah which she is not. Ololon is of the earth - mortal and globular, and the daughters of Beulah of heaven and vortical. Like the stream flowing in two directions, the two Larks suggest the two possibilities which make up the Contrary.

Thus in the process of writing down, the Mortal prophet Blake discovers that his poetry is nothing more than a "covering cherub" - another veil over the truth, or another empty promise of fulfilment. But this understanding evolves from Milton-M's implicit rejection of Milton-T, a negation which is a further playing of the game of reason. To write the poem which was supposed to negate Milton-T's view of prophecy, was itself written in the economy of prophecy as it utilized the structure of negation - in claiming that Milton-T was wrong. But there is still the possibility of the vortical Milton-M.

In plate 40, the struggle between the two comes to a head for Ololon tells Milton-M of its mistake, as the children of Jerusalem will still be annihilated if it negates Milton-T.

No sooner had she spoke but Rahab Babylon appeared
Eastward upon the Paved work across Europe & Asia,
Glorious as the midday Sun, in Satan's bosom glowing:
A female hidden in a Male, Religion hidden in War
Nam'd Moral Virtue, cruel two-fold monster shining bright
A Dragon red & hidden Harlot which John of Patmos saw

In trying to get at any simple truth of religion, one inevitably must adjudge something previously thought to be the truth as falsity which is the condition of war in the binarism of truth/falsity. But Milton-M has the solution:

All that can be annihilated must be annihilated.
That the children of Jerusalem may be saved from slavery.
There is a Negation & there is a Contrary
The Negation must be destroyed to redeem the Contraries

The negation of Negation becomes a positive act. Rather than simply cross out Milton-T, Milton-M holds his views as being Contrary: different, but not opposed as an ordinary opposite. This avoids the war and the annihilation of people, but requires the annihilation of the Self, the unitary ego which attempts to purify itself of Evil. This takes the form of "casting off"⁵⁷ the philosophic influences of Bacon, Locke, Newton etc. which are the Greek, metaphysical and rational elements that have opened up the abyss of the globe of blood and choked the understanding of the vortex.

With the realization that the world was revealed when Jesus rent the Ark and curtains of the temple, the separation between the earth and heaven also becomes no more than another Contrary. At this moment the "Moony Ark Oloion", which is the vision of plate 36, becomes Jesus "in clouds of blood". These though are not globes of blood, dessicated life, but "streams of gore" flooding through the clouds, which are:

Written within & without in woven letters: & the Writing
is the Divine Revelation in the Litteral expression
A Garment of War.

This writing is not the weaving of Jerusalem by Enitharmon as a universal spirit body which Los's prophecy promises to the dead as fulfilment at a future time, it is writing revealed and literal in the present time, in the blood of living understanding which drips through the clouds. And it is also War - because war must also exist as a Contrary between the oppositional wars of religion and the mental fight of the opening stanzas of Milton-M.

And not just war, but everything must exist as a Contrary in the revealed world. For Blake is not sounding the beginning of a unitary revelation for that was Jesus's work and has been done already. This is the revelation of the Contrary as the continuing process of understanding that is both rigid and flexible as it accepts all points of view. For memory is wrested from the past as something stable by which to judge the present in hope of the future, and judgement is made now. But not 'once and for all', for memory as a living thing changes its patterns as different things are foregrounded, thus a stable judgement may be made in different ways by two different people, or by the same person at different times.

Thus language avoids 'the eternal struggle of art against education, of the literary artist against the continuous deterioration of language', for it is no longer seen to deteriorate (which suggests a prior edifice which is slowly destroyed), but simply to change. Immediate Experience is most certainly 'at the bottom' of everything for Blake, but as it is certain, it avoids any reciprocal transcendence with subjectivity or objectivity. For language does not claim absolute truth for all time, and therefore nor may the subjective or objective it generates. Thus Los and Enitharmon must continue to roll in clouds over London, promising something else hidden at the present for a later time, as there are still those who view revelation in that way. But for Blake, war is mental, and it is up to the individual as to whether s/he escapes from his/her vegetated and oppositional form. Plate 43 dramatizes this event in its portrayal of two vegetated humans like ears of wheat,

and another, who holds up his/her hands in the attitude of crucifixion, freed from the earth, and looking as though s/he⁵⁸ would be as happy flying through the air.

Nevertheless, in the economy of mental fight, this is not a fixed reading of Milton-M, it is not the only way of understanding it, for to set up one sole reading would be to negate all other readings, and this lies at the other end of the war Contrary. What is important about Blake's use of Contraries in his dynamic world is that following the logic of revelation there cannot be anything good hidden under anything bad. Nothing is hidden and every action, in that it is not judged, but is, carries its own value up-front as an ethically imperative value - "You shall know them by the fruits they bear."

Dynamism and openness, do however have an affect on many readings of Blake. We can criticize Tayler's reading for she has stabilized Satan as an Evil that must be eradicated before the millennium comes, and thus misses out on the struggle Blake has undergone in the poem Milton to understand what the millennium is. This is not, though, to say that Evil is Good. The openness reveals that Satan is Evil, but the dynamism of Blake's world requires that war with him is mental and not physical, for Evil and Good are two ends of the same Contrary, and to attempt to eradicate one part will eradicate the whole.

We can also criticize Tayler's notion of a teaching relationship between Blake and Milton, for this too stabilizes Blake as teacher, following the Aristotle's understanding of metaphor⁵⁹. Meaning or truth does not flow from the correctness of Blake into the vessel of Milton to raise up Milton to the Blakean. Instead, there is a dynamic equilibrium between the poets the one balancing the other at each moment of understanding. Blake is indebted to Milton for having opened his mind to the problems of metaphysics, just as Milton is indebted to Blake for showing that his work is also already revealed.

From this "position", we might suggest that the difficulty of Blake's later poems lies in his dynamism and openness, rather than in any hidden meanings to be revealed by a careful study of his sources. And we might suggest a reason for his own abandoning of *The Four Zoas*, in that its criticism of Los and Urizen amounted to a negation of them which is self-contradictory in the economy of the Contrary. And if we are to account Thomas Taylor a source of Blake's thought, we must end on an ironic note, for when meeting with Taylor on the 16th November 1832, John Payne Collier wrote:

I dined in company with Thomas Taylor the Platonist - on all accounts a remarkable man - for the peculiarity of his polytheistical faith, for the extent of his learning in that direction, and for his personal appearance

If Blake had known Taylor better, and had known that his apparent Protestantism of 1804 was no more than a disguise to publish the works of Plato in translation, maybe he would not have disagreed with Taylor so radically, and maybe he would never have developed his own philosophy of the Contrary.

Notes:

- 1 - See Chapter 6.
- 2 - E 756.
- 3 - Ibid.
- 4 - Here again, the period might be taken as symbolic as it is the same length of time that Ezekiel prophesied in Chebar, although this may be a coincidence.
- 5 - PAE, p.91 note 6.
- 6 - E 701.
- 7 - Cumberland lived in Bishopsgate, Trusler in Egham.
- 8 - E 703.
- 9 - The Cumberland papers in the British Library manuscripts room run to several volumes.
- 10 - See letters 2 and 3, E 699-700.
- 11 - The date of Taylor's replying to Cumberland thanking him for the books.
- 12 - E 700
- 13 - Ibid.
- 14 - George Cumberland, *A Plan for the Improvement of the Arts of England* (London, 1793), p.26.
- 15 - Number 16, *Cupid and Psyche* is almost illegible.
- 16 - George Cumberland, *Thoughts on Outline, Sculpture And the system that Guided the Ancient Artists in composing their Figures and Groupes* (London, 1796), p.7.
- 17 - See *Public Characters of 1798* (Dublin, 1799), p.147.
- 18 - Brit. Mus. Add. Mss. 36498 f.244, (Printed in full in NWB).
- 19 - Because of the fact that Blake could be the only partner to whom Taylor refers, even if *Thoughts On Outline* was not delayed as argued above, and had

been published in 1796 with Blake's plates complete (there being another reason that Cumberland had not sent it to Taylor with the first two books) the following argument still holds.

20 - Taylor also suggests in his letter to Cumberland that his Platonic thoughts might seem 'as eccentric as they are novel', which suggests that at least the recipient of the letter had not been at the lectures and possibly even his partner.

21 - Which we named above Text A, after Margoliouth.

22 - E 728/9.

23 - E 730.

24 - *The Cratylus, Phaedo, Parmenides and Timaeus* trans. by Thomas Taylor (London, 1793). [Cited as CPPT].

25 - Ibid. p.iv.

26 - Ibid. p.248.

27 - Chapter 6.

28 - CPPT, p.248-9.

29 - Ibid. p.249.

30 - Called "Parent power" on FZ Page 4, line 6.

31 - Ibid.

32 - FZ Page 10, line 10.

33 - Being the unveiling of truth on pure & holy foundations.

34 - *Death of the Good Old Man; Death of the Strong Wicked Man; The Soul Hovering over the Body.*

35 - Cromeke published a prospectus for the work on the 11th November 1805.

36 - When Blake returned from Hayley's 'care', many of his friends tried to get him work now he again lacked a benefactor.

37 - CPPT, p.252.

38 - Ibid. p.254

- 39 - Ibid.
- 40 - See Chapter 4 above.
- 41 - In his illustration to Blair's *Grave* and at Petworth House.
- 42 - In S. Curran & J.A. Wittreich, *Blake's Sublime Allegory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1973).
- 43 - *Milton* Plate 15, ll.23/24.
- 44 - See 'On Denoting', Bertrand Russell.
- 45 - *Milton* Plate 5, ll.28-31.
- 46 - Whom Blake 'casts off': See *Milton* Plate 41 ll.12/18.
- 47 - Who shunned iambic pentameter with great vehemence.
- 48 - *Milton* Plate 15, l.52.
- 49 - *Milton* Plate 3, ll.8/10.
- 50 - *Milton* Plate 3, ll.11/12.
- 51 - See design *Milton* Plate 33.
- 52 - *Milton* Plate 35, l.41.
- 53 - *Milton* Plate 35, l.42.
- 54 - *Matthew* 5: 17-18.
- 55 - *Matthew* 7: 1-2.
- 56 - Even the example of the Bible gives four different 'gospel truths' which are contradictory on various issues, and the laws of the prophets and Moses are tangled with contradictions. As such, the arguments of both Christian (eg. William James - *The Argument for Faith*) and Jewish (eg. Emmanuel Levinas - *To Love the Torah more than God*) philosophers become pragmatic versions of Kierkegaard's 'Either ... Or ...', based on the absolute uncertainty of absolute truth.
- 57 - Used in opposition with 'Cast on' on Plate 41 of *Milton*, this terminology takes on the air of knitting rather than negation. In fact, Blake does use the expression "take off [Albion's] filthy garments" to mean the same thing on the same

plate, and seems to refer to the unclothing of Albion ready for the picture "The dance of Albion".

58 - The use of these bisexual terms here is not fortuitous as redemption through the Contrary is by the combination of the sexes.

59 - See Aristotle *The Poetics*.

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